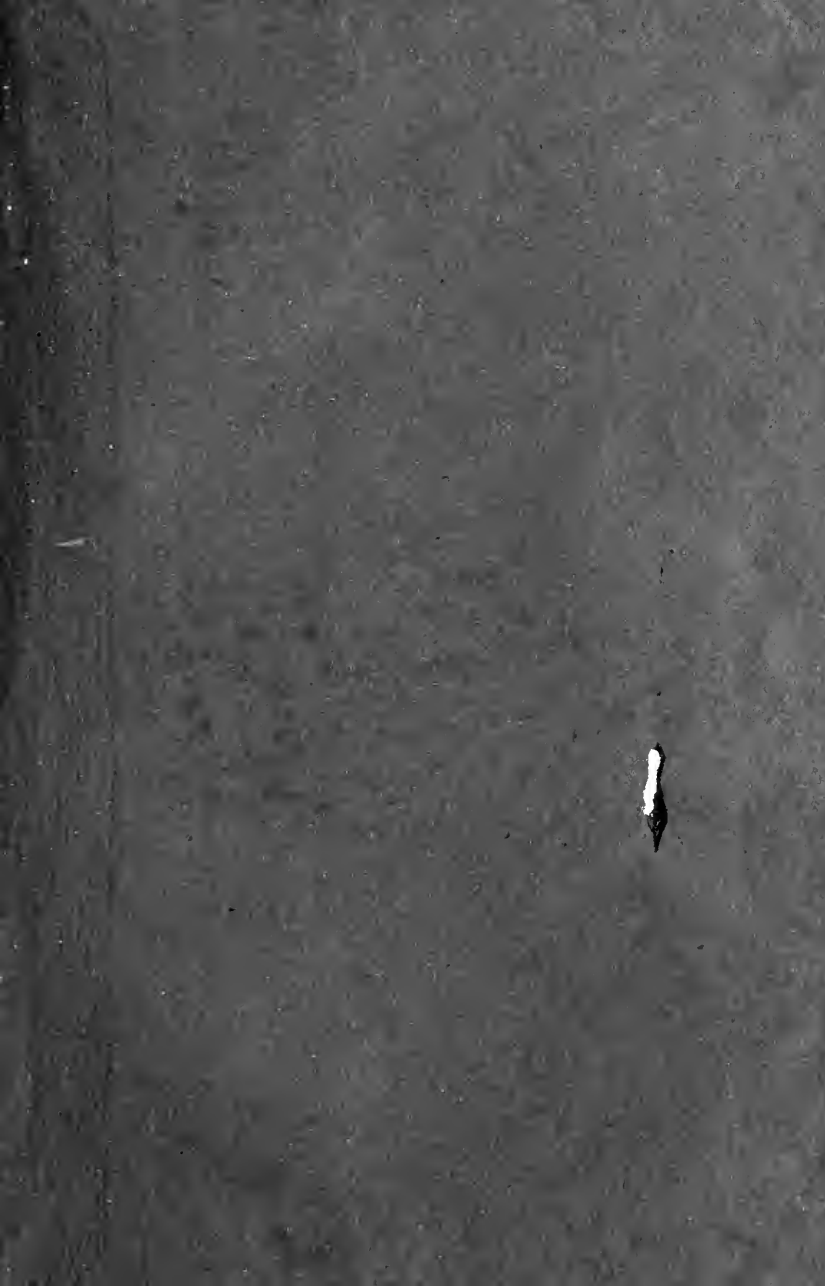






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THE IDOLATRESS:

And Other Poems.

To Mr. Harman (awful)
for the kind regards
from Mr. Wells

THE IDOLATRESS:

And Other Poems.

By JAMES WILLS, D.D., M.R.I.A.

“With these in troop
Came Astoreth, whom the Phœnicians called
Astarte, Queen of Heaven, with crescent horns;
To whose bright image nightly by the moon
Sidonian virgins made their vows and songs,
In Sion also not unsung, where stood
Her temple on the offensive mountain, built
By that uxorious king, whose heart, though large,
Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell
To idols foul.”

MILTON'S *Paradise Lost*, I., 437—446.

LONDON :

FOR THE AUTHOR,

JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, PICCADILLY.

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TO
KATHARINE ELIZABETH WILLS,

This Volume is Inscribed

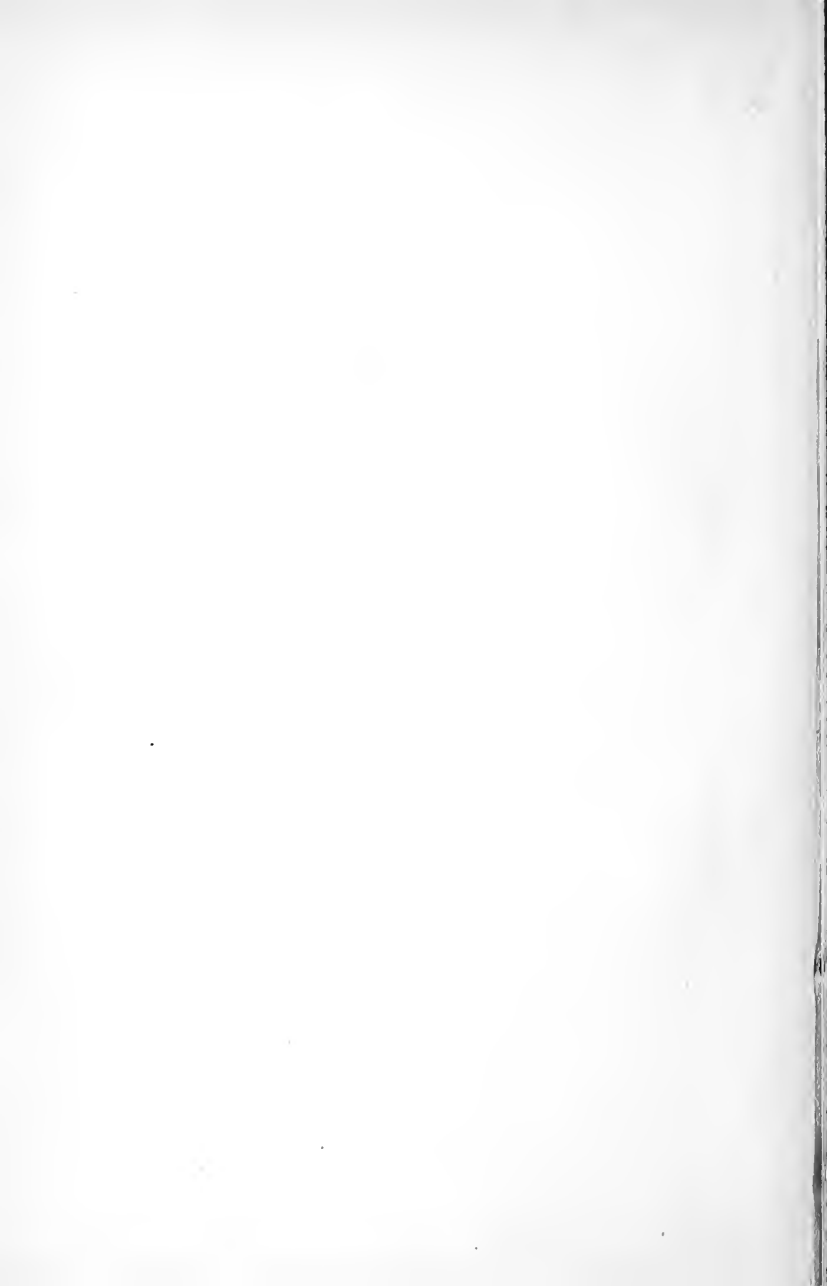
AS A GRATEFUL TRIBUTE TO HER STERLING NOBILITY
OF CHARACTER,

AND AS A HEARTFELT TESTIMONY OF DEVOTED
AFFECTION.

11221

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Dramatis Personæ.

KING OF ISRAEL.

STRANGER.

JERADA, *the Idolatress.*

ISDRAFIL, *her brother.*

TAMAR, *daughter of PHARAOH.*

PRIESTESS OF ASTAROTH.

PRIESTS, LEVITES, CHORUS, ATTENDANTS, SPIRITS.

SCENE—JERUSALEM.



THE IDOLATRESS.

PART THE FIRST.

SCENE—*A Court before the King's House.*

SCENE I.—KOHATH, ABIRAM.

Kohath. What of the King, Abiram?—rumours dark
Are whispered o'er the land.

Ab. Nor idly, friend.
He sits like one by some blank horror bound,
With stony gaze on vacancy, by turns
Started to living utterance, as if
To answer the grim spirit of his dream :
Now chiding, now in taunting mockery
Complaining, self-upbraiding.

Kohath. Say, doth rumour
Hint aught to explain this fearful mystery ?

Ab. No cause is yet divined. Some say misgivings
Caused by the popular discontent ; while many

Ascribe his woe to sad remembrances
And stern remorse.

Kothath. Ay, there is cause enough.
Doubtless that sin returns upon his heart,
The wrong inflicted upon noble Tamar,
His first-espousèd wife, whom all lament,
Driven by unkindness and unseemly slight
Whither we know not.

Ab. Alas, poor Princess !
She is at last returned. She hath wandered
Far among mountain wilds and desert places,
Crazed by her long-accumulating sorrow
And outrage, suffered for her Tyrian rival,
The haughty heathen Princess, Jerada,
Who rules in Israel now, and warps our King
To deeds which may draw wrath on Judah's land.

Kothath. 'Tis said she also hath become reformed
To Israel's faith.

Ab. Some such report is current.
'Tis certain she hath much conversed of late
With some among the Levites ; but these say
The task is vain. Though oft to reason yielding,
The force of prejudice, too strong for reason,
Would ever, like a flood repelled, rush back,
Carrying its foam of old remembrances.

Kothath. But say, how know you of the Queen's
return?

Ab. I saw her yester eve, upon the roof
Of her lone dwelling.

Kothath. Stood you near in sight?

Ab. I stood amidst the cedar boughs which droop
From the projecting cliffs above the roof.

Kothath. Say you her looks were sad?

Ab. Past all describing :
I never yet saw features more forlorn,
As seen obscurely in the pensive twilight,
Herself more pensive and subdued, with eyes
Angelic, pure, and passion-free, upturned,
As if their spirit were in act to soar
Away into the starry heights. Then down
With sadly solemn glance, like a dark thought,
As if to say it must not be until
The darker way were trodden.

Kothath. Sir, thou'rt subtle
To read the voiceless language of the eye.
Spoke she no word?

Ab. Her lips did slightly move,
But distant murmurs only reached my hearing.
Her maidens sung ; and then at intervals,
Faintly and low, heart-broken breathings rose,

As if in speech of woeful utterance,
Half to herself, half to her maiden choir.

Kothath. Alas, poor Princess! I could weep for thee,
Were not all personal wrong as nought compared
With Israel's deeper woes. What man, my friend,
Can bear a breast untroubled and behold
Our sage King, once for wisdom's fame renowned,
So fallen at last and captive to base passion,
'Slaved by that wilful woman, who hath planted
Her foul hill-worship over Sion's heights!

Ab. Yet not without deep sorrow; inly galled
By the corroding clasp he cannot break.

Kothath. Or rather wills not—'tis the chain of
will.

Ab. He sorrows for the sin.

Kothath. Yet sinneth on,
As if two demons in one breast contend,
To tempt and lash the sinner with his sin.

Ab. Ay, even so it must be; thou describest
The fatal marriage between Sin and Sorrow.

Kothath. They who approach his presence nearest, say
He sits in moody disarray, with eye
That bears no look of purpose. How unlike
The sage whose fame attracted from her sphere
The bright Sabeian star!

The tongue of muttering Treason in the streets,
Or rumour of misgiving.

Ab.

My wise friend,

It needs no oracle in times like this
To carry terrors to the thoughtful heart—
Enough, there's sin in Israel, and there is
An Eye that sleeps not, and a Mind which never
Deserts its purpose, though the vain forget.
If for a moment God avert his face,
Then fools straight ask where is He. He, mean-
while,
In whose broad grasp of plan a thousand years
Are as a watch of the night, waits His own hour,
By no weak impulse hastened or delayed.

[*Scene changes.*

SCENE II.—MOUNT OLIVET.

Jerada (alone). How may this wavering end? His
frowns and smiles

Succeed each other like the wanton changes
Of sun and shadow o'er the Tyrian sea
Each other chasing. * * *

If he weakly yield
To those grim Hebrew priests, my deadly foes,
Then all I live for in this world is gone :
Honour—with honour, life. * * For can I change
To save a light and spurious show of state,
False to the gods, my sires, and native land,
With faithless front to serve the statueless
And unsubstantial Power which is their God ?
Can I constrain the scorn of this proud heart
To bow where I have mocked, and blindly worship
The objectless, impalpable Vacancy,
As if it were Apollo? * * *

Yet I own

There seemeth some dread mystery of power
Which glooms these solemn hills, like a dread Presence,
Felt, though not seen—a viewless influence
Which even the gods would seem to know and fear.
Once—so the record runs—the Lord of Day
Stood, by this Power suspended in the South
For two long summer days, in shame beholding
The helpless slaughter of his own dear sons ;
While pale Astarte, o'er the dewless vale
Of Ajalon with answering horror gazed
Over that gory field. * * *

* * * Such fearful tales

Too speciously recorded, damp the faith
 Needed in trial's hour. 'Tis hard to trust
 In gods who do not help themselves; * * *

* * * but, still,

Shall I turn traitress to my fathers' worship,
 Whose images sit star-like o'er the dawn
 Of infancy—first dreams of love and awe?
 Or can I trample nature from my breast—
 My very nature—for 'twill bear that name—
 Which childhood drew with life's first nutriment
 From tale of nursling lore, poetic legend,
 The food of earliest wonder? Oh! that love
 Could breathe new life into the past, that so
 I might be what I was in those bright years—
 Heedless and happy as yon breeze-borne fly,
 That wavering on the summer air, pursues
 From flower to flower its trackless course of bliss.

* * * * *

But this is sorrow's dotage, all unmeet
 For the heroic heart, through strife and peril
 That seeks its glorious crown. 'Tis virtue's part
 To meet adversity's stern visiting
 Even with a sterner front. * * *

* * * If our old faith

Be—as those Hebrews feign—all idle fiction,

Grafted on elder truth by Gentile error,
How is this glorious world made desolate !
If their dark creed be true—that truth were death
To earth and solemn sky, and ocean deep,
Unpeopled of their glorious spirit life ;
The flower-scented vale, the sacred hills
Where men built altars from the first of days,
Discrowned of all their sanctity ; and so
The love and faith of nations turn to lies,
And the world's record be but mockery,
The airy visions of some dreamer's brain—
It seems too vast a consequence. * * *

* * * Away,

Accursed doubts ! Away ! Great Baal ! thou—
Thou art no fable ; for all eyes behold thee ;
All bosoms feel thee. Earth, the common mother,
Gives fruits but at thy bidding. Hill and vale,
Clothed in thy spectral-tinted lights, breathe up
Their grateful incense from a thousand realms.
Unnumbered hearts and eyes draw light and life
From thine exhaustless fountain. * * *

* * * Bright One ! shed

Some spirit from thy glorious orb within me.
If it be true that thou art Nature's god,
And not a fiction of our Gentile fancy,

Give witness of thy power ! * * *

* * * I grow faint ;

A cloud falls on my sense. (*Sits down and sleeps.*)

Enter STRANGER.

Str. She sleepeth in our spell—herself a spell
 Beyond hell's weaving, had not our dread foe
 So framed her for our use. * * Power of beauty !
 Least earthly of man's low idolatries,
 That gilds with love the poison fruit of sin,
 That lures to feuds, and jealousies, and slaughters,
 And glorifies the hollow front of death
 With thy thin veil of radiance ;—winning fools
 To leap into its dark embrace, before
 The call of nature, for a painted skin
 And charm, which oftenest fades away if won ;
 Fair to the eye, and bitter to the taste.
 Most fair and fatal gift !—stray beam of brightness
 From the eternal throne—where they who bend,
 Heaven's angels, scarcely are more fair than this
 Frail sisterhood of clay, which hath been ever—
 From their first mother, in that fatal garden,
 Soon blighted for her beauty—our best lure
 To wile the world to hell. * * *

* * * I must not lose thee,

My fair Sidonian pearl; thou must accomplish
 The plighted task of beauty, the entail
 Of Eve to her sweet daughters, and secure
 Thy babbling pedant lord, who cheats himself
 With specious craft of words and glozing proverbs,
 Content with forms and seemings, oft mistaken
 For doings of the statute. * * *

* * * Thou fair thing!

I would not lose thy service for a throne,
 Save that of Heaven; so, for the occasion,
 I win thee, as thy sex is won, with toys.
 Now ho! my airy minions—my familiars!
 One moment let me break your dalliance,
 And call ye to my aid. Where'er ye loiter,
 In grot or shadowy dale, sleeping in flower,
 Or battling, in the breezes charioted,
 Or, mote-like, in the sunbeams wantoning,
 Or dancing in the broken rays that shiver
 On the gay bubbles of the mountain brook;
 From earth, air, water, fire, where'er ye be,
 Your master calls—appear!

*[Voices from all round are heard in wild low
 harmony, seeming to grow from distance.]*

Voices. From the rocky fountains, where
 Liquid echoes fill the air;

From the brook whose gushing lays
Wind o'er many a pebbled maze ;
To thy call we fleet around
With the witchery of sound.

From the zephyr's airy cell,
Rocky cleft, or wreathèd shell,
Where the wind-god lightest slumbers,
Steal we sweetness for our numbers,
Numbers which can bind in sleep
Moonlight sky and crystal deep.

Lo ! we whisper—music round,
Bubbling deep from wells of sound,
Upward seems to float, and then
Softly sinks to earth again,
With a fall that thrills the heart
Lest the witchery depart.

Now in feathery maze we fleet,
And the air grows loudly sweet ;
While the skyey round we fling
Sound itself is on the wing,
Till mute wonder loseth all
In one still ethereal fall.

Str. It was not this I sought, my gentle spirits.

Voices. Master, speak ! Thy slaves will pour

Eestacy that floweth o'er,

Passion's dream, that doth begin

Guilty glow of waking sin ;

Softness, which shall steep the breast

In the fever of unrest.

Speak ! The spirit we will shed

Leads to glory's crimson bed—

Pride of place—the haughty will

Which gives constancy in ill ;

All the dreams man calls divine,

Which but make him doubly thine.

Str. Enough, enough ! Do I not know ye well ?

Behold yon sleeping mortal ! I would bind

Her spirit in the ancient faith of Tyre,

In which it somewhat has of late been wavering.

Be now your office, with soft spiriting,

To waken gentle dreams of days gone by.

From the shut cells of life-long memory

Recal ancestral shadows, and repair

The broken images of old heart-worship ;

The faded, touch with orient hue ; what time

Hath chilled, rekindle with new fire

From passion's burning furnace ; cancel fears,
And fond desires, and womanly relentings ;
Let artful guile and smooth duplicity
Adorn her face and tongue, perch round her lips ;
And arm her spirit for our present service
With all your arts. But well ye know your part,
And so I leave ye to your task. Mine calls. (*Disappears.*)

(*The Voices close round JERADA.*)

Voices. Sleeper, sleeper, to our charm
Let thy thoughts take hue and form.
Phantoms from the days that sleep
Buried in time's soundless deep,
Rise and waft thee back again
To the light of Syrian skies,
Where old roofs and altars rise.
Now once more, with youthful eye,
See the votive train sweep by,
With each old solemnity,
Shrine and image, grimly bright,
Mingling in with brassy light
In the gay fantastic rite.
See old Bel with tiar'd head ;
See the blood for Thammuz shed ;
And Astarte's crescent fair
Gleaming on the haunted air.

Next, by virtue of the song,
 Be thy spirit bold and strong,
 And thy brain replete with art
 To mislead thine own proud heart.
 Lastly, if thine arts shall fail,
 And the powers above prevail,
 That thou may'st serve our master still,
 Take thou constancy of will;
 Spirit which destruction draws
 Make thee martyr to thy cause.
 See, 'tis done! Our way we take.
 When we vanished be, awake. [*Voices pass.*]

(*Jerada awakening*). How sweet heaven's music is!

Live I? Has death

Unmanacled my weary soul, to float
 On sphere-born music to Assyrian skies
 Through the still moonlight air? * * Alas! 'tis day.
 I nothing see but sky and spotted cliff
 And leafy chasm. * * *

* * * Sure, 'twas not all illusion.

Methinks diviner echoes vibrate faintly
 Along the mountain and still air, or else
 They speak within my spirit, for I feel
 Not merely mortal, at this moment waked

Into heroic nerve and constancy,
 Armed for the trial which to-night may bring.
 Already day declineth. Olivet
 Casts its long shadow over Hinnom's vale,
 While Salem's mount yet lifts in glittering light
 Its broad expanse of roofs. * * *
 * * * Before red Baal
 Gilds this grey height again, my heart forebodes
 The end of all these trials.

[*Scene changes.*

SCENE III.—KING'S HOUSE.

KING—CHORUS.

King. How daylight lingers ! Yonder glaring orb
 Stands still, suspended on its tedious course,
 Like some hill altar of the westward height,
 Refusing to resign the hour of rest.
 Would it were night !

Cho. Even at the word, behold
 Yon dusky hill-top doth conceal the sun,
 Which tarries not its stated course to run,
 Nor hastens, whether thing of mortal mould

Move slow or swiftly, or in joy or woe,
Untroubled by the care of things below.

King (unheeding). As if that curse, on Ebal spoken,
were fulfilled in me ;

At morn to long for night, at night for morn ;
Their slow-paced alternation still refusing
Gay cheer or grateful rest.

Cho. O ! what can mortal trust !

See power laid prostrate, glory in the dust,
Dispersed the compass of all-grasping mind.

Alas ! how vain

His hope to gain

True peace of soul, who leaves the right behind !

Him black remorse pursues, and gloomy care
Sweeps o'er his prospect, like the desert wind,
Poisoning life's air.

King (unheeding). This calm is not of Nature's
life. I bear

A living death within me—a cold void,
A blank infinity of gloom, in which
All thought is lost but the black mystery
Of some indefinite horror, to which aught
That hearts at ease most dread, were but relief,
For its more life-like seeming. * * O ! that sleep
Might steal me for one moment from myself—
Sleep, or its sterner likeness !

Cho. The hour of cool, O King ! and grateful rest
On gold and amber coloured pinion glides

As a winged angel, up the dusky west.
The orb of day appears not, yet abides,
Crowning with glory the dim summer crest
Of leafy Olivet ; the shadowy hill,

Dark'ning amid heaven's hues of fading light,
Sheds dewy fragrance from its breezy height
Far o'er the vales, and brooks that murmur still.

King. Such is the inward blackness of despair,
The lights of earthly joy in vain play round it,
Flouting its darkness with gay mockery ;
The well-known and familiar form of life
And spectacle of Nature, seems to breathe
Reproach upon the abandoned heart ; no more
To share the vital consciousness which binds
Man with the outward world. I do feel
Life's pleasures, sorrows, hopes, and wishes gone !

Cho. Alas ! with this what sorrow can compare !
To have all goods men seek, yet nothing share !
To sit amid all blessings, yet unblest !

King. 'Tis a fond fancy !
The young heart, ignorant of evil, dreams
Of that which is not, and transfers its gay
Imaginings to Nature, which becomes

So gifted with a language and a life.

The lover, thus, will kiss the wild sweet flower

Which bears the fragrance of his bosom's thought ;

Or of the bright far-beaming heavens inquire

On what fair star are fixed the eyes he loves.

A sound, a picture, breath of garden air,

Some colour of the morn or evening sky,

Can wake a thousand airy images

That have no substance more than empty dreams.

Man walks in a vain shadow, beyond which

All dark realities are met. Once past

The golden mists of youth, and love, and hope,

A vapour from the desert breathes decay,

And blights the prospect widely. Yet I blame not

The fool whose folly dreams a fleeting joy :

The dream of bliss were bliss could it endure

The chill touch of experience. Well it were

If anguish were as fleeting !

Cho. O King ! we deem not so.

Wealth, wisdom, empire vain

While, rightly used, they flow

As waters o'er the plain,

With blessings as they go.

Yet saddest 'twere of all

If gifts of favouring Heav'n

Should but as vengeance fall,
In Heavenly goodness given.

King. Power, glory, riches, I have known them all,
And found all earth affords beneath the sun
Idle to satisfy the weary breast,
Sated with joys which men call happiness ;
Passions which burn as sunbeams on the desert,
To scorch and wither, but awake no life.

Cho. O, Friends ! if Pain

But for a moment's intermission smile,
If an hour's rest beguile
The Poor to gladness in his lowly shed,
If Penury its scant bread
Can eat in thankful trust,
Shall Kings complain ?
Shall Heaven's best gifts be vain ?

King. Ye do misjudge. The lowly rest content
In tranquil ignorance of the coming ill—
The secret of some future, sadly seen
In the far forecast of prophetic thought,
As he who looks from some high eminence
Sees tempests for the morrow gathering rise
Upon his visual circle wide and far,
While sunshine sleeps below ; but most for him
Whom higher station lifts to wider care.

And as the mount high raised above the plain,
Though glorious at its height to eyes below,
Is chill and cheerless there in lonely light ;
Such is the state of Kings ; condemned to know
No human fellowship of joy or grief ;
In solitary grandeur raised above
The common breathings of humanity.

Cho. Call him not lone whose breadth of heart can
hold

Communion with the soul of every age,
The poet and the prophet and the sage,—
Whom all things which the realms of life unfold,
Of living frame or vegetable mould,
On hills that pasture, or in woodlands stray,
Call master—skilled their properties to show,
Compare and number, measure, class or weigh,
And over all, the light of system throw.

King. Alas ! for the laborious idleness
Ye to the wise impute, too often truly ;
If rightly he be wise or prudent called
Who gropes and guesses with much cost of life
For secrets little worth the waste when known—
At best uncertain—and on this fair world
Builds sounding systems, and o'erlooks the Will,
The stamp of Mind, the wisdom written there.

Cho. Yet may we fitly praise
Him who is prompt to vindicate the laws
Of moral order, and assert the cause

Of suffering virtue, or to raise
His just acceptance in the social scale,
And by high worth prevail,

Superior 'midst the maze of worldly ways
In which the drudge of fate and fortune strays.

King. What profiteth the wear and waste of brain
If it convey no lasting calm, or still
No painful throb of the sick heart to rest,
Nor charm the grim devourer from his prey,
Or add one moment to the restless circle
Of life's dull iteration, which deceives
The dupe of present sunshine, on the road
His fathers trod—the tale so often told?
Such is the boast of that ye fondly deem
The moral of life's fable.

Cho. Vain, indeed,
If wisdom may discover nought but woe,
Or studious labour nought but folly know;
If Heaven's best gifts convey no sense but care,
And life impart no lesson but despair!

King. Job's comforters are ye—not much unlike
The reverend greybeards whose sage tediousness

Increased the sorrows of the patriarch,
Adding their ill-timed taunts to his afflictions.
Enough, there is no balm in sophistry.

Cho. Alas ! we've seen the day
When thou in other mood,
O King, didst count for good
All thou dost worthless say ;
Thy servants grieve to hear thee so betray
Thine honoured self, and nobler spirit given,
The gift vouchsafed from Heaven.

King (not heeding). Ay, there are moments worth
the rest of life,
Which they leave dark by sad comparison—
Bright flowers, whose fruit hath been consummate
sorrow

In their autumnal ripeness. I remember
Time was, when glory's phantom splendour lay
Upon the giddy path too long pursued ;
I deemed man's life too short for all its gladness,
Its purposes of knowledge and of action.
'Twas a vain error. Now I truly learn
There's nought on earth so vain as mortal wishes,
And life seems lengthened far beyond its uses.

Cho. Life's uses are His purposes who gave it.

King. Ye say the truth. He who would waste the gift

On that it was not given for, should not marvel
If it prove vain. But softly,—who comes hither,
With garb unwonted and portentous aspect,
Forbidding, haughty, strange—in whose bold eye
Authority seems mixed with craft—
Striding with proud step, as the land were his?
See that he be admitted. * * *

* * * It were well

If aught may break on this heart-weariness.

[*Enter* STRANGER.]

SCENE IV.

STRANGER, KING, CHORUS.

King. Now what art thou, who comest thus un-
bidden,
And what thine errand?

Str. The same errand, King,
That once led hither the Sabea Queen,
Won by thy far-spread fame.

King. Thy faded aspect
Doth speak far travel, and the plough of thought
Hath deeply traced thy features stern and wan.

Thou, doubtless, art of some famed Gentile school
The founder or the tongue?

Str.

I have proved all

The bubbles men call science, floated down
The frothy stream of mortal generations,
By symbol, scroll, or monumental writing,
Or Runic scrawl on rocks of Araby—
The writings none may read. I, too, have watched
Like Hermès, on the star-communing tower,
And from the planetary highway sought
Secrets the wise pretend are written there,
By happy chance oft verified. I have pored,
Like other men of science, into charnels,
To find life's secret, and much laughed to find
Death in the teacher's chair.

King.

Vain words, O Stranger!

If I may truly read thy drift, thou mockest,
Deriding with half-witted foolery
The mysteries of science.

Str.

Nay, O King,

Who hath the mysteries they vainly seek,
May smile a little at the groping game
And ponderous trifling of your bearded sages,
Stumbling haphazard by realities
In quest of dull chimeras; idly groping

For hidden causes, Nature's secret workings,
In tricks of language and equivocal terms,
Selected to convey some fallacy
By tacit usurpation, and impose
The shadow of a sense, which, plainly shown,
Were simply food for laughter. Or, if haply
Some casual truth be found, and, by like chance,
The gem, in error, be not thrown aside,
Or by presumptuous vanity perverted,
Then what a cloud of academic dust !
What scrambling in the schools ! How loud
The ghosts of Babel fill the air with noise,
Exalting much Philosophy !

King. To mock
Needs little wisdom. What hast thou to teach,
To other men unknown?

Str. The craft I teach
Bestows the empire of the world on those
Who at my feet draw wisdom. Kings from me
Have learned to fix dominion or enlarge,
To govern progress, and secure their thrones
Amid the changes of the stormy stream
Which bears away as bubbles all things human,
For lack of politic counsel.

King. Vain thy craft

Of brief expedients and aims that shift
The present peril on the morrow's chance,
To stay the course of that perpetual tide
That bears away the statist and his schemes
To the dark unknown future.

Str.

Most sage King,

Thy sayings are all worthy of thy fame.
I feel my heart draw wisdom from thy words,
And if I rightly read the policy
Of thy sage councils—in thy rule explained
By liberal institutions—they confirm
The maxims of my secret policy.

King.

Methinks

Thou riddlest darkly, Stranger.

Cho. (apart.) Mark how guile

Worms in by flattery !

The serpent wile

So charms the unwary victim from its tree.

Str. Has not thy wisdom loosed the slavish bonds
Which cramp the nation's growth, and sever Judah
From all the world beside ?—by free allowance
Restoring to their just equality
The gods of every land—conciliating
The jealousy of classes.

King.

Vain, O Stranger !

And by our law unsanctioned, are such aims :
We know no God but one in Israel,
Whose law binds all, and is for ever fixed
Above the will of earthly kings or councils.

Str. True, wisest King!—most true. But in His
councils

A reconciling foresight still provides
For the far future, by His will brought on.
No law is fixed. His primal law is progress,
By the slow agency of circumstance,
The onward lapse of time, and accident
Of good or evil deeds. A feather's fall,
The lightest breath that blows, by man unheeded,
May move the train which in the ages' lapse
May crush a nation, or give birth to empires.
Such is the steady law which guides the world
To its maturer end. It is thy glory
To be monarch of this mighty era—
The age of promise to thy father's line ;
For now the Gentiles with their gods become
All tributary to thy central throne ;
And Salem, queenly in her state, sends forth
A sunlike influence to the ends of earth.
All gods bow down to thine—and are permitted
That thus by tolerant policy all peoples

'Tis not for mortals to forestal His ends
By trampling on His laws declared of old.

Str. Believe not God will rule this land for ever
By thundering from the hills of Canaan.
His great world was not fashioned to require
The artist's finger to hold on its course,
Like some unfinished engine.

King. Wisdom strives not
With the contentious arts of sophistry,
Or circling shifts of sly evasion.
Enough—God's judgments best attest His will :
Thou know'st how oft with vengeance memorable
They with their idols were pursued ; what plagues
And hideous slaughters followed on the breach
Of the least written law and ordinance.

Str. Such is the law of progress—discipline
Controls rude natures and subdues resistance,
Then kindly toleration reconciles,
And wins to order, and conciliates.
So doth the world grow on—the destined course
Of the first plan—the far finality
Of Him whose will is Nature, and who made
The world, and not man only. In due season
To be together moulded, by one man
Born for that end—which all things now declare.

Cho. Thou may'st as truly shape the unwritten scroll
Of empire yet to be—

Forestalling God's decree—

As guide the march of clouds on high that roll,

Mocking the shadows vain of earth below ;

The triumph or the woe,

The festival or strife,

The pomp and gilded show,

That fleet and pass away

While Fancy's shuttle plies its airy play.

Str. Your strain is somewhat high-flown ; I have
imps

Can sing a song more meet for kingly ear.

King. A song !—what mean you ? I had deem'd
thine art

The wordy warfare of the Sophist school.

Str. Command thy servant, mighty King, the air
Shall utter forth a burst of vocal sweetness

As heaven itself has rarely known of late,

From spirits which obey my spell.

King. What are they ?

Be not such evil ?

Str. Nay ; thy Maker, King,

Was theirs—all brethren from the same great Father,
Who never made aught evil.

King. Well, they sinned.

Str. Ay, we all sin ; this, too, is of our nature :
These sage and courtly youths may sing or say
From whom we have it. He who made the heart
May, doubtless, tell thee wherefore, and the end ;
And, knowing his own workmanship, excuse
Some trivial deviations : or perchance
The worthy end may justify the means,—
So say those venerable fathers, priests
Of Jove in other lands.

Cho.

O, friends, too well

Those words of blasphemous irony declare
The secret mission, on that front of gloom
Already stamped, the mystery graven there
Upon those stony lineaments, which bear
The seal of doom,
The felon brand of the red vault of hell,
The eternal tomb.

Str. Your courtiers are uncourtly, King, and babble
Like innocent youths who have not known the world,
Or felt the glorious pulse of noble freedom.
Far higher thoughts exalt thy kingly breast
Than these degenerate and servile fears,
Unworthy of the free. The Power ye assail
With contumacious foolery, yet may claim

To teach ye manners in that same low home
Ye prate of so discreetly, gaining so
No mean advantage in the noble strife
With Him ye so exalt. Of this enough—
I speak not wisely, casting pearls to swine,
The lofty speculations of the wise,
Unfit for slavish ear, and spirits chained
By ancient superstitions. King, there are
Deep secrets meet but for the sage's ear,
Wonders for wisest privacy reserved;
For which I crave thy confidence, when next
Thy lonely thoughts invite me. Now, no more.
Thy thought shall be sufficient summoning.

King. Enough * * he's gone !

Chorus. O King, we saw not how !

King. 'Tis as a dream.

That form was hardly human as it stood,
The aspect of some blighted monarch wearing,
Or rather some grim leader of revolt. * * *
His words were folly—yet beguiled the ear
To listen tamely ; by that earthless gaze
Of gray lacklustre meaning fascinated,
Even as the gaze which eastern merchants say
Draws fluttering victim to the serpent's jaw,
Subdued by terror. His deep utterance

Came like a spell to bind the prostrate will
To heed those ravings fanciful—which came
As if he had perused each inmost weakness
With curious aptness to my feeble mood.

* * * Well, it is somewhat to be thus one moment
Roused up from gloomier horrors. * * *

Now to meet
My more seductive temptress: wished, yet feared,
For each new day her mood doth grow more wilful,
While I, alas, wax feebler.

[*Scene changes.*]

SCENE V.—REZON *and* SIMON, *meeting.*

Rez. Ho ! whither now, my son ?

Si. I seek the fields.

Rez. 'Tis well. Thou'rt wanted by thy friends to-
night.

Come early forth—we meet hard by the brook
Of Kedron—all who hold their country dear,
To hear the wrongs of Israel. We shall have
A stirring audience, if I reckon right,
Full of combustible feeling. With our care,

The spark shall not be wanting. There shall meet
All who have wants or grievance—coatless heroes,
Who know no roof but nature's—living poorly
On what their hands can steal : the proper metal
For patriot manufacture.

Si.

Who but they

So likely to sit free from legal bonds
And scrupulous restraints? Yet, jest apart,
I fear we play with perilous instruments.
Some shrewder wits among the Hebrew people
Grow too familiar with these worn-out fancies,
Too oft repeated ; and there be who think
We make the grievances on which we clamour,
Troubling the Commonwealth with endless brawls
Of fancied grievance.

Rez.

'Tis not wise, my son,

To harp o'er much on these hypocrisies,
They chill the ardour of the patriot breast.
Ay, laugh !—I grant it all a sorry jest
When scanned too nearly with misgiving eye.
But public virtue stands not for vain scruples
To gain or hold authority—enough
The veriest name, to consecrate the cheat ;—
Our wiser knaves, to gild their craft, must borrow
Their fervour from some high-flown sentiment,

And feign a virtue if they know it not.
 He best dupes others who best cheats himself.
 Good names mask evil deeds. If thou wouldst lead
 The swinish herd to plunder and sedition,
 Get up the glow of noble indignation.
 Tell them what wrongs they tamely bear, and chide,
 Yet praise their suffering virtue, till applause
 Ring from the thousand lying throats ; nor heed
 How singly base the hearts and brainless heads :
 If duped by thy shrewd art, it is enough—
 The thousand hands are thine.

Si. Till now I thought
 The popular champion, in high strain denouncing
 Oppressive rulers and unequal laws
 With all the spirit which to truth belongs,
 His country's noblest ornament. But this
 Sounds like a mocker's irony.

Rez. Believe—
 Such is the statist's wisdom : wilt thou be
 The only credulous fool in this knaves' world ?

Si. Such arts, I grant, have served thy purpose
 well.

Rez. Nay, but reflect, my son—our cause *is* good.
 To-night we vindicate the law—and kindle
 A flame to purify our holy hills

From sinful image-worship : so far, truly
We fight within the law. Our shew is justice.
We cannot answer who that flame may singe.
Look on the fair side only. Self-acknowledged,
All baseness crows the heart.

Si. This is, indeed,

A lesson grave from old experience.

Rez. Itell thee, boy, what forty years have taught—

A lesson to be learned, if thou wouldst rise
To lead the men of Israel. I have moved
The people to idolatry ; and when
Idolatries grew rife and fashionable
Among our upper ranks, with equal craft
And full as noble and indignant zeal,
I've moved the very stones in Israel
To rise against them.

Si. These be doubtful changes—

What is their honest name ?

Rez. My son, there are

Two sides to every question ; upon each
There's truth enough for any public leader,
If he but keep it uppermost.

Si. I confess,

Thy doctrine hath a liberal aptitude
For any purpose, if fixed not too high.

Rez. Still in the clouds, good Simon.

Si.

Be it so.

But who comes moving hither, in a cloud
Of rainbow hues, and even at distance loading
The breeze with sweetness?

Rez.

Bitterness, my son,

To the true sense—thy young and fickle spirit
Is fascinated by the glittering pest,
Thy country's bane, the grievance of the day.

Si. A fair one, truly.

Rez.

Youth, it is most foul.

(Loudly). Ho, Sorceress!

Si. Stay, master—she will hear thee!

Rez. I take no heed—what is she, that a warrior
Should quail before her saucy countenance?

Si. I pray, be still!

Rez.

My boy, I'll let her know—

Idolatress, harlot of Tyre, hilloa! (*JER. approaching.*)

Look not so high, thou heathen Impudence—

Blotch, blister on the head of Israel!

(Moves to intercept her.)

I have a story for thy private ear:

Be not so much in haste. Thou doubtless art

Bound to the worship of some wooden god—

I will not long detain thee.

Jerada (entering). Wretched man !
I only shrink from thy foul tongue, the fount
Of all pollution.

Rez. Sweetly mouthed, fair Princess !
Thy lips distil no balm.

Jer. Sir, I must pass.

Rez. One tender word !

Jer. Sir, I have heard enough ;
I know thee, and thy lying craft, full well.

Rez. Good ! Now, Simon, thou shalt hear my
 character

Traced cunningly, by no unskilful tongue,
No unfit model for street rhetoric,
Taught by the Tyrian fishwives. Come, sweet
 harlot,

I take thee for my mirror. What am I ?

Jer. A plotter, liar, robber, and assassin,
Reckless of gods or men ; by daring fraud
Who dost obtain ascendancy o'er fools,
And then by turns of matchless perfidy
Betrayest thy senseless dupes, and all who trust thee,
To suffer for thy treasons, thou escaping
By coward change of mask : each new deceit
So far out-lying all that went before,
That victims still are into trust outnoised

By dint of falsehood inconceivable.

Now, let me pass !

Rez.

By Astaroth, well mouthed !

Come, we are friends—congenial souls. O Jove !

I fain would be thy scholar.

Jer.

Let me pass !

Rez. Pass, soft one. We do wrong some devil,

Whose brazen image waits your suppliant knee,

Some stick or stone doth wax impatient :

I pray them pardon—ha ! ha ! ha ! She's gone !

Ere morn we will repay her goodly lesson ;

She shall confess that I have store of mischiefs

For others than my faithful friends. Enough !

The people are assembling—and remember,

Whatever may betide, this night we have

A righteous cause.

Si.

I grant, a fair pretext.

Rez. Once more, my son, forego these weak distinctions.

If we can serve our end by righteous deeds,

Right deeds are right, although the devil do them.

[*Scene changes.*]

SCENE VI.—KING, *alone.*

King. She tarrieth of purpose * * * even so,
The strife must end at last * * if strife
This torpor of the heart be fitly called,
Which wakes to pain, but feels no interest
In any living joy.

It has been said
That pain's extremity subdues the sense
To cease from painful feeling ;—would 'twere so
With the self-tortures of the guilty breast,
By the pale phantom of accusing conscience
Incessantly pursued where'er it turns,
Turning all things to shadows of reproach,
Transforming pleasure's name to oracles
Of coming woe, or agonizing records
Of joys for ever flown !

'Twere but relief
To outface some living terror ; that may tell
We are not yet on black Gehenna's shore,
The realm of these grim shadows, rising ever
Like smoke from its fell pit. * * O, for will
To shake this nightmare lethargy aside,
And stand once more myself ! unbound
From ties I feel not, yet cannot resist,—

Smiles which I trust not, taunts which I resent,
 Claims which I must deny, or yielding, face
 The condemnation ; but no more. She comes.

(*JERADA rushes in flushed, with looks of excitement.*)

King. So, come at last. I thought thou hadst forgotten,

Thou hadst so long delayed. Upon thy cheek
 There are streaked crimson tinges, and thy lips
 Yet tremble as with hasty discomposure.
 I prithee, smooth thy angry brow awhile ;
 It needs no sullen mood to aggravate
 These tortures which I bear. Nay, wilt thou speak ?
 Friendship and love ask smiles.

Jer.

No doubt, no doubt,

If before kings we smile and feign content,
 It little matters with what secret woes
 The bosom bleedeth inly. Love there is,
 That shrinks from the intrusion of complaint,
 But asks the sympathy it fails to give :
 I would not seek such love.

King.

Thou tauntest wildly.

I looked for soothing from thy love : is this
 The fitting answer?

Jer.

Truly they who seek
 Uncertain favour in the breast of kings

Must wear the court attire of levity ;
And hide all sorrows with the mask of smiles,
Whate'er offend them. I am not of these.

King. Believe, O Princess, I have full enough
Of bitterness to brook, without addition
From her for whom the deadly draught is drained
Even to the loathsome dregs.

Jer. Oh, not for me
Be aught of pain endured !—there is no need.
I, with my portion, by my father given,
May seek my native country, and live there,
With honour here denied.

King. Princess of Tyre !
These tauntings are unseemly. 'Twere more just
To speak thy woman's wish. What want is left thee ?
The wealth of kingdoms but awaits thy asking—
The treasures of rich Ophir, Tyrian raiment,
Cloths stiff with gems and efflorescent gold ;
The spicy fragrance of Sabeen woods,
Which tempt the phoenix to his fiery death
By virtue of its sweetness. If thou lackest
Yet costlier gifts, still, at thy word, there is
The Ethiop's pearl, or the bright Indian crystal
That holds the imprisoned sunbeam. I know not
What more thy heart can wish for.

Jer.

These, O King!

May serve to purchase the scant loyalty
Of the rebellious and false-hearted Hebrews.
Such words may suit some pedlar from the East,
To laud his bales of costly trumpery
With talk magniloquent. They are not kingly.
Such things affect me little. The respect
Due to my royal ancestry and race
Is stained by insult—not for me alone
Intended—by thy disaffected rabble.
Even for thy throne, 'tis time to cast off torpor,
And teach thy foes respect.

King.

Name thine offender.

Jer. All are offenders. It were no light stain
To know so many sordid names. On me
The scowl of every Israelitish brow
Heaps insult, unatoned by blood; where'er
I move on road or street, the grouping rabble
Stand glaring on me. Even within this hour,
As I came hither, bound in loving duty,
I was encountered by that felon tongue
That now is more than law in Israel.

King. I know of whom thou dost complain—a
wretch

Who trades in popular discontents, oft finding

Right reasons for wrong deeds, and making truth
Subservient for deception,—right or wrong,
Keeping within the law he would subvert
By others' crime and folly. Thus protected,
'Tis hard to touch him.

Jer.

It were well, O King !

If he may touch not thee. Would thou hadst seen
His insolent eye, and heard his ribald tongue,
Not without menace, as I hastened by,
Alone and unprotected, on my way !

King. Thou must not heed his malice; thou
shouldst be

Too noble to be stained by such low hate ;
It cannot hurt thee more than the fair moon
Is stained by earth-born mists.

Jer.

Were it but this,

I would retort their hate with prouder scorn.
Throughout the countless tribes of living nature
There's nought more mean than the vile brute that
walketh

In man's similitude, and is not human
In aught that separates man from brute, but vice.
To me they are less than dogs; but curs, when rabid,
In spite of baseness oft grow dangerous.
'Tis not fierce looks I fear, but evil deeds.

King. O fear not thou ! 'Tis not thy hurt they seek.
They only love not order, and hate rule
That keeps their fingers from their neighbours' wealth;
And love to use their noisy privilege
Of railing on their betters unrestrained.

Jer. Ay, so I know them. False to gods and men,
Pretending reverence to the jealous God
Whose chosen race they dare to name themselves :
He, truly, might have made a wiser choice.

King. They among mankind are not worse or
better,
Chosen for the purpose of the Ruler only—
Not for their virtues.

Jer. I may not presume
To understand the wisdom of your law.
One thing is plain—if thou art King in Israel,
It should not be to bend to this vile race,
Chosen, doubtless, for their vices. What were kings
If those they will to honour, be fit mark
For public insult and contumely ?
What is wisdom, if the king named Wise
Can fail to grasp the reins of government,
Himself by every popular freak controlled
To court his enemies and desert his friends ?

King. Thou art unjust—for me, my oldest friends,

If friends a monarch be supposed to have,
Have all deserted : priests and counsellors
Look on me from afar, and shake their heads,
Reproving by stern silence.

Jer.

What would they ?

Thy reign to Israel is the splendid era
Of commerce, wealth, pacific policy :
Thy glory fills the eye of heaven and earth,—
What would they have ?

King.

Alas !—too well thou knowest.

Jer. Too well, indeed ! 'Tis an old craft, O

King,

To mask foul treason's front with lawful names.
No people better loves idolatry,
As your priests name all worship but their own—
But they hate duty, and love not control.
Yield but one step, the next will tread within
The sanctuary of State ; and when removed
Each faithful servant round thy throne, betrayed
By foul reports and base imaginings—
Then comes the dark page of a tragic tale,
In kingly annals trite.

King.

Such well may be

True for the Gentile nations—not so here :
All yields to a supreamer Will than man's,

That rules alike men's deeds and shapes events
To His fore-destined ends.

Jer.

If it be so,

Then, is His will not doubtfully declared?

Thy God, who shapes men's ends, hath seen and
suffered

The worship of our lady, Astaroth,

Whom none who live in heaven can fail to know,

Conspicuous when she drives her silver car

Above the crystal concave 'midst the stars.

Your Hebrew stories tell of dreadful deeds,

Of wrath which tarries not, when aught offends

Your ruling Spirit ; yet no wrath was shown

Upon that golden eve you well remember,

When from your roof you gazed, a willing witness,

Upon our ancient rite. The winds lay still

Within their mountain hollows—not a cloud

Concealed us from that jealous Eye in heaven,

When, from our altar on that eastward height,

Confronting His own temple, softly rose

Our grateful wreath of incense to the queen

Whom all the Gentiles honour, and who sheds

Her silvery beams on all. Since then

The same stern Eye beholds, and still no sign

Is seen or heard of : He molests us never.

Shall priest or Levite, when their God approves?
Or hath his justice slept till now—that thus
The right unquestioned for such space, shall now
Be suddenly found wrong?

King.

Nay, this is vain—

Thou deem'st of God as if He were a man,
Acting on human motives, and beholding
With human vision which sees not the end,
Or in blind earthly rage strikes every crime
With mortal vengeance. Had the Lord been so
Impelled by blind resentments, earth had been
A blighted and a lifeless solitude,
Swept by His thunder clear from sin as that
Fair lifeless orb ye worship. None can say
Why the Lord's vengeance tarries, or how long
His patience may forbear; a thousand years
To Him are as a night-watch. This is plain,
His people must obey His law—in this
The path of safety lies; nor leaves a doubt
For idle questioning.

Jer.

And this, O King—

King. Forbids the altars of thy Gentile gods
To be permitted here in Israel.

Jer. It was not thus you spoke, when first I came
With princely dower worthy of Hiram's daughter—

Thou then didst, as a trivial favour, give
That you now hold of such dire consequence.
But can thy God approve such flagrant breach,
Which violates all kingly faith?—for surely
I had not so resigned my country's gods
For all the thrones on earth! Believe not so,
Think not so poorly of me—be assured
The question is of life or death.

King.

Fair Princess,

There is no question of thy life.

Jer.

Dost thou fancy,

O King, that I, a Royal Princess still,
Who ever from life's earliest infancy
Have walked in honour and in reverence, ever
Dispensing favour and reward, can bend
To be a shadow in thy privacy,
Protected from foul outrage by contempt,
As some low captive, the cheap spoil of war,
Born for the loom and distaff, or to endure
The taunting triumph and malignant scoff,
Or sneers of courtesy mockery? No! no! no!
Death first!

King.

Thou dreamest.

Jer

'Tis a bitter dream!

King. Prithee, be calm. I cannot bear to see

This passionate excess. Come, let us reason ;
No power may satisfy a want untold.
What may content thy heart? .

Jer.

It needeth not.

I cannot strive against the factious hate
Of priest and people, lone and unprotected ;
Nor brave that power which kings cannot resist —
A lawless people and a civil faction
Grown mighty by endurance. Save thyself.
To-morrow thou wilt number one friend less,
And the fierce Hebrew hearts have rest from hate.
Yet when thou hast yielded kingly power and place
To the encroaching waves of the deep tide
That swells around thy throne with stealthy pace,
Thou mayst remember sadly one, to whom
Thou hast preferred thine enemies. (*Turns to go.*)

King.

Yet stay

A moment more ! Though obstacles beyond
Aught thou canst fancy now resist thy aims
Once more the law must bend, as it has bent
To a sore need—but once may be forgiven
In hope of the result. Now clear thy brow.
Another day, I trust, thy heart will own
Truths clear as daylight ;—in this trust once more.
Take thou this signet, which shall make thy word

Potential as the king's, who must be blind
To many things permitted ; so—no words.

[*Scene changes to the front of the Temple. JERADA appears with a triumphant countenance and airy gait. Her attendants are shrinking from the appearance of a band of sacred singers and a crowd of people assembling at the gate.*]

Jer. Ho ! ho ! I've conquered. It is ever thus.
Once more ! once more ! so yields the feeble spirit,
Imagining each new sin a step to virtue,
Or that they hold for virtue ; ay, once more
May serve for many a turn ;—'twere well to build
A temple to the god of female tears ;
For some such god must be. But, friends, we loiter.

All. Princess, there's danger in the way.

Jer. Fear not ;
They must respect this little talisman.
It is an idol which they needs must honour
Who blaspheme all the gods.

All. The King himself
Might turn back from the scowl of those grim faces.

Jer. O fear not, friends ; we walk in high assurance.
The Queen of Heaven sustains us. We have conquered :
We have the King, and heed not Priest or People.

Even my dark rival, Memphian Tamaris,
Who would have laid our altar in the dust
Because the Gipsy Queen herself is false
To great Osiris and the gods of Nile,
The fowls and beetles which her fathers honoured,
Herself now howls, deserted ; though yon rabble
In malice to their King, not love to her
Dark face, now triply tanned, shout for her wrongs,
And trumpet her false praises. Let her keep
Her rabble state, the queen of fanatics.

We have the throne. (*Approaching the Hebrews.*)

Heb. Alas, my friends, 'tis hard

To bear the unrighteous falsely glorying.

Jer. What muttereth yon Hebrew chatterers?

Speak ye aloud, or sing as is your calling,

Whiche'er ye deem the fittest vehicle

For Hebrew malice.

(*The Hebrew Minstrels sing.*)

Lo ! earth profaned for vengeance cries,

And asks why Heaven is still,

While yonder foul idolatries

Confront her holy hill.

Why sleep the lightnings of high Heaven ?

Is Salem to dishonour given ?

Where once Jehovah reigned alone,
His foes securely tread ;
And mockery on David's throne
Insults the righteous dead.
Where is the balance and the rod
To smite the foe of man and God ?

Jer. A pretty song, and full of pious wrath.
Come, let us reason now, my pious youths,
For I am in a gracious mood this hour,
And fain would win such sweet-voiced proselytes.
Where dwells your God, whom ye exalt above
The moon and stars, and mountain deities,
Or the dread ocean ruler, or who holds
Dominion over mortal destinies—
By all the nations known ; by old tradition,
In poem, tale, and story canonized ;
The burthen of our legends old and sacred,
Through the whole Gentile realms and tribes. But
yours—

Where dwelleth he ? Who e'er hath seen his face ?
What are his gifts ? What shower of golden rays
Pour from his path in heaven upon the hills ?
What gleams of pensive thought and soft desire
Silver the shadowy eve, or when the stars

Grow pale to see our virgin queen arising,
The worship of a hundred realms? For she
Holds with her brother god divided rule,
Making the night rejoice, as he the day.
These, with their bright compeers, remoter thrones,
The solemn empires of the bygone world,
Leave not one speck of space unclaimed for him
Whose worshippers deny them. Whom serve ye?

Heb. The Maker of those things, thy deities.

Jer. Where is his dwelling? I would gladly find
him.

Heb. Above you, and beneath you, and around.

Jer. O! ye worship empty space; or, haply, else
A god who nowhere dwelleth!

[Hebrew minstrels sing.]

He dwells in darkness and dwells in light,

Above the firmament;

The beams of day when the moon is bright,

The solemn shade of the starry night,

Are the curtains of His tent.

He walks on the tempest wing in might,

When the solid hills are rent;

His spirit breathes in the blooming spring,

When the wilds grow sweet and the forests sing;

On herbless wild, on the trackless wave,
From shore to furthest shore,
In the crowded street where vain mortals rave,
In life's idle rout, in the silent grave
When its empty noise is o'er,
Where crime keeps watch in her guilty cave,
In the sacred courts where the saints adore.
In vain may heathen bid us tell
Where the All-present doth not dwell !

Go, take the wing of Morning—soar
From sunrise to the deep,
Where day's last beam departs—explore
Where never angel winged before,
Past Being's outer steep ;
Till Space be passed, and Time no more
Thy weary travel keep :
Swift as the light, on wing of Will,
Unseen He watcheth round thee still !

A Levite. Thou hast thine answer : pass, if thou art
wise.

Voices in the crowd. What saith the Idolatress ?

Levite. Speak not, but pass. [*Jerada passes on.*

1st Lev. She moves off less elate ;

2nd Lev. Nay, mark you, sir,
Her proud eye quailed not, though her cheek grew
pale
With rage suppressed.

1st Lev. She hath a rampant humour,
By which she rules at court.

2nd Lev. It is reported
Her influence was formerly controlled
By the good Princess Tamar.

1st Lev. 'Tis yet strange
That brain so full of cunning can be duped
By senseless superstitions.

2nd Lev. 'Tis most common;
Such is the true condition of our thoughts
To hold opinion, and know not how.
It is a common error which refers
To human reason for the faith of men,
For fiction or reality. Men know,
Or hold belief by habit and the schooling
Of early years, or sanction of experience;
Contracting faith and confidence from custom,
And the world's use.

1st Lev. It is of late reported
That she is secretly a proselyte.

2nd Lev. 'Tis known

That she hath had much late discourse
 With an old priest of Tyre—since circumcised
 A proselyte to the law. But without end ;
 For still, 'tis added, that proud will of hers
 Doth overbear all reason—still persisting
 In obstinate fidelity and zeal
 For dim traditions of her native earth,
 And old ancestral gods.

1st Lev.

Delusion strange !

[*Scene changes.*

PART THE SECOND.

SCENE I.—JERADA, ISDRAFIL.

Jer. My brother, I reproach thee not : yet blame
 Thy overzeal and unclaimed courtesy
 To my swart Memphian rival, whom these Hebrews
 Miscal the Queen ; I know not why, save that
 She is a veering proselyte, and adores
 Their cold and statueless Divinity.

Isd. Give but a moment's patience. Not long
 since

I met her with her maiden train, at eve—
 Wandering, as is her wont, through pensive twilight,

In plaintive guise, with step forlorn and sad—
Moving like the pale moon amidst the stars,
In silent majesty.

Jer. Thy tongue is wanton.

What said she to repay thy idle gaze?

Isd. Nothing to me. At intervals methought
Her plaintive and heart-broken murmurs rose
Into low words of mournful purport,
Half to her maids' address, more to herself.

Jer. Too much of this—thou reachest no end of folly.

Isd. Untouched by sadness which to see I wept,
My young companions mocked; for which I chid
 them.

Jer. No doubt. What followed next?

Isd. Nought but a smile
Of bright resignèd sadness, that yet bore
A stately beam of queenlike courtesy,
Which, gladdening, humbled too.

Jer. O, humbling gladness!
Thou didst but shame thy wiser comrades, boy,
Nor honoured much thyself: they better marked
The malice of the grim Egyptian smile.

Isd. They read not the soft eye which looked on me
Just for one instant, and then upward turned,

With look of patience mixed with pious trust,
So full of lowly love and resignation,
That it was hard to witness, and not worship
The Spirit she so prayed to.

Jer.

Even thus low

Thy courteous knee hath bent; or else they wrong
thee.

Isrl. Sister, it is no time, were they even worthy—
To meet these brawling slanders. Even now
I hear, not far, upwinding from below,
With Kedron's waters mingling, choral notes,
Which sound like strains of triumph half in fear,
Glad notes in sorrow uttered.

Jer.

Even so.

The praises of the high and glorious gods,
Sung by weak mortals in adversity,
And in dishonour. 'Twas not thus of old,
With spirit so degraded, we were wont
To steal, with culprit eye and felon pace,
Amid the sleep of prying Israel,
To our hill worship. Then ere gentle eve
Went down the west, and gradual night stole on,
Hushed with sweet expectation, Astaroth!
How boldly from that silence burst our song!
Rivers of sound from countless multitudes,

Waking glad answer from our hills, and filling
The soft Assyrian sky. But go; I'll wait their
coming

A little onward, in yon leafy height.

Thy watch is set beneath. (Exit ISDRAFIL.)

[A wild copsewood on a low elevation at the
base of Mount Olivet. JERADA enters
alone.

Jer. So far all seems to prosper. Yet, whence
comes

This dark misgiving, like the boding shadow
Cast by some coming ill? I should be now
Rejoicing * * Somewhat presses on my heart.
I feel as one committed to his doom,
Or who stands pledged to mortal enterprise
That binds the plighted champion to advance,
After the boast of bravery is gone by
And clamour of the admiring crowd, at last
Alone with danger. * * (pauses.)

* * What know I of Baal?

I never yet saw aught of any god—

(A strange Youth emerges from the copse.)

What art thou?

My country's native, by thy Tyrian garb
And lineament not less.

Str.

Princess of Tyre !

The gods have marked thee for their own—hereafter
To live and reign among them.

Jer.

Who art thou ?

Str. That shalt thou timely understand ; but first
Bravely fulfil thy honourable task
So well begun, and win thy glorious name,
To be hereafter praised in song. Thy country
Shall ring with praises of thy deed to-night.

Jer. And next, what shall the end of this night be ?

Str. 'Tis veiled in a bright mist from mortal eye.
It will be glorious. Thou go on, and conquer.
Thy life's bright crown awaits thee.

Jer.

When, and where ?

Str. Ask not. Ere Baal gild this orb at morn
Thou shalt know much to mortal mind unknown ;
Turn not and look not back. This night shall tell
What thou must be—and where ! Behold thy
friends,

Who wait thy leading ! We shall meet ere morn.

Jer. He's gone—even as he came—or do I wake?—
He looked more fiend than god. His cruel eye
Did seem to mock his smooth tongue's utterance :
His speeches were of sense ambiguous,
Like sentence of some oracle that urges,

The victim of some fatal destiny. Alas !
My heart beats audibly. I would 'twere over !
But they are nigh.

[Choral voices become loud, and the
Heathen train approaches.

(To the Priestess.) At last, good mother !
I fear thou art weary.

Priestess. Noble Princess, no ;
I have feasted in thy triumph ; but still take
My long-forgotten office fearfully,
And with a trembling joy. Are we secure ?
Has the grim Hebrew despot no reserve,
To cheat our hope, and lure us to our fate,
To popular rage betrayed ?

Jer. This were too crafty
For the soft pedant monarch, only cunning
In sentences and proverbs trite. His power
Rests in this hand [*shows the signet*] : the State of Israel
Lies here to-night. Our chain of royal guards,
All mighty men of war, are posted round,
Holding each mountain pass, that no approach
May break upon our rites.

Priestess. Alas ! my daughter,
What guard shall watch the guarders ?—godless He-
brews !

But armed, and therefore to be far more feared ;
 Wolves trained to murder ;—and there runs a rumour,
 That met us, down yon hollow, on our way,
 Of many thousand ruffian populace
 Fast gathering at the grim Betrayer's call,
 To perpetrate some foul atrocity,
 Reckless of laws and king alike— * * *

Methought

I heard a swarming murmur down the vale,
 Its fearful portent breathing—in dark distance,
 The voice of fear and slaughter. Who may stand
 Between us and their fury ?

Jer.

Queen Astarte,

And all-protecting Baal, and every god
 Who watches o'er our sacred rites.

Pr.

But now

'Twere well to cease from inauspicious words :
 Our Tyrian youths come on with better omen,
 The praises of the high and glorious gods ;
 She first, whose silver car begins to light
 The eastward mists. How few, alas ! we are,
 Stealing with tremulous port and felon pace
 To our hill worship.

Jer.

Yes, I remember

Those happy days—long past—for I was then
 A heedless child, by sufferance looking forth

From some high lattice on the sacred fires,
 With airy brightness lessening from far heights,
 Like stars of heaven that start successively
 O'er the dark vault of night—fire after fire,
 From hill to distant hill, with joyous tidings,
 Rejoicing men and gods. How many voices
 Went up together from all the land,
 The chorus of a people !

Pr. Princess, these
 Are sad, yet hallowed, recollections.
 Shall these old eyes behold such days again?
 Hush ! the anthem.

*[Enter the Sidonian train, singing ; some bearing
 vessels, images, and symbols of Astarte.]*

SCENE II.—*A Valley near the City. A Crowd of
 the People.*

REZON, SIMON, a LEVITE.

Simon. Such things, 'tis said, have been.

Old Man. Yes, master, yes ;

When Judges ruled the land, I well remember
 My grandsire, an old warrior, used tell
 Of armies in the clouds, and apparitions
 Of idols grim and spectral demons, seen
 Oft between night and morning.

Simon.

Even yet,

But four nights since, wandering by this same
brook,

In lonesome thought, there came a far wild wailing,
Upon the night air swelling fitfully,
As from th' asphaltic pool, where yet, 'tis said,
The ghosts of Sodom haunt the gloomy shore.

Rez. Ay, friends, even so it is—traditions old
Bear witness to these hearings. Such signs are
The bodings of disaster, and foreshow
Heaven's judgment upon rulers.

Lev.

And, if so,

Not less, perchance, on people.

Rez.

Ay, all sin ;

But chiefly they who cause the land to suffer.
The people suffer for the ruler's sin—
Sold to the devil-worshippers of Tyre,
Thro' whom a Gentile god usurpeth place
Before the Temple. In nought we err
But our idolatrous submission,
In bearing that which Heaven abhors, and earth
Is weary of. Well might the sacred stones
Once trodden by your honoured fathers, start
To avenge tneir memories ; and compel
Just retribution for their children's wrongs ;

Ground down, for Gentile priests and their vile mistress,
The Tyrian harlot ; and build impious altars
To Baal and Moloch, and th' accursèd one
They name the queen of heaven. Are ye prepared,—
Children of Abraham, will ye submit
To throw aside the Tables of the Law?
Deny the Spirit which sits within the Ark,
And choose, for Sion's people, from abroad
A ruler and a god?—or dare, at last,
To rise, and nobly vindicate the right?
Choose now whom ye will follow !

Peo.

Only thee !

The people's friend !—no other !

Rez.

Gentle Simon,

Thou hast a ditty suited to the time.

Peo. The song ! the song ![*Simon sings.*

Yon star, the light of shepherds' eyes
That watch the dewy fold,
Its cheering beam of late denies,
So wan and deathly cold ;
All hearts are sunk in deepest gloom
And sadness ; none can tell
What evil spirit doth consume
The heart of Israel !

O for the strain of power !—the hand,
 From whose charmed touch, 'tis said,
 The sounding silver while it spanned,
 The fiend of darkness fled !

O for that chord, that hallowed lay,
 To break the unholy spell,
 The voice inspired, to drive away
 This woe from Israel !

*[As the song ends, a low strain of distant music
 floats upon the air.]*

Rez. Ho ! heard ye there ? No holy strain, my
 friends,

Though coming from the abode of Judah's ruler,
 Whose politic wisdom would appease the priests
 And followers of Baal.

A Peasant. Noble master,

It comes not from the city. *[Strain heard again.]*

Sim. List again !

A Peasant. Down from the sky it seems to fall.

Another. Be still !

Sim. It falls like starlight from the heavenly vault.

Rez. Ye are mistaken all. I trace the voice
 To its accursèd source, on yonder hill-top.
 Good master minstrel, thou should'st have more
 cunning

In thy own craft. Such was the strain I heard,
Nigh Rabbah in the plains, on such a night,
Even at this very hour, when not far off
The Ammonite with the Assyrian host
Lay camped, and, save the slow-paced sentinel
Of the mid-watch, the land was still around.
Then came that discord from a low-browed hill,
Where the idolaters disturbed the night
With howling orgies of their devil-worship,
Baying the moon like dogs. O! little then
I thought to hear such impious music echo
Over the Mount of God, and calmly heard
By father Abraham's children, as it were
A pleasant song! O but I blame ye not!
Your manhood is crushed out by the hard gripe
Of the exacting Publican. 'Twere unmeet
That people so dishonourably farmed
To swell the Tyrian harlot's scornful state,
And feed her obscene altars, should presume
To tread the footsteps of their glorious fathers,
Or fight the battles of the God of Hosts.

(The people murmur.)

Well, ye are moved. Full glad am I to see
Ye feel the force of shameful imputation,
And nobly scorn the charge of cowardice.

When the Supreme Disposer of events
Decrees to exalt or save a state, 'tis shown
By the consent of honourable men
Who hold in place, repute, authority,
The sure credentials of their sacred calling.
God's servants work not with the devil's arms,
Fraud, falsehood, breaches of the moral law.
Alas ! they err who hope redress, from crime—
And, more—who trust that traitors can be true,
When their black ends are won. * * *

* * * But let me not

Be an ill prophet. Curst may be the hand
That strikes the blow. The Lord is on His throne,
To witness with all-seeing eye, and guide
With overruling arm, to His own end.
Him all the unseen working elements,
Moral and social, secretly obey.
The statist's error, or the people's folly,
The agitator's craft, the despot's will,
The madness of the moment or the age,
Are but the mingling threads of the broad tissue
Wove by one Hand, on one imperial plan,
Too broad for mortal vision. In this hope
The good man trusts, in these uncertain times.

[*Scene changes.*]

SCENE III.—*King's House.*

KING, ZADOC.

King. Yes, leave me, servant of the Holiest,
As He has left me. All have left me lone—
The counsellors and friends of early life.
And so it should be. I have ceased to be
That which I have been : I no longer know
Sorrow or gladness, human hope or fear,
Or aught of life, save the dull blank of living
In this vile dungeon of a frame :
The light of day, or silent hour of night
Return to me with sad monotony,
And life is but a long-drawn weariness
That sits upon the bosom as the spectre
Which haunts the fevered sleeper.

Zadoc.

This, O King,

Is the sick heart's diseased imagining,
And needs the Great Physician. He alone
Can heal the broken spirit. Gird thy breast
With resolution, only once to breathe
One pious wish for aid.

King.

I cannot wish !

Bid me take eagle's wing, and scale the heaven,

It were as easy. Wish! this were to break
Human will.

Zadoc. Thy Lord will surely break that bond, if
thou

Use His appointed means—in which lies
The only strength on earth to mortal given.
'Tis but to seek it. Heaven is scaled by prayer
More swiftly and more sure than eagle's wing
Can sunward mount.

King. Think'st thou the murmur false
Of heart-belying lips, such as men use
To mock with, in life's hollow courtesies,
Will pass with Him who may not be deceived?
First, bid the sinful mortal quit himself;
Put on a nature as a change of dress,
Or steal from heaven a beam of its clear day
Wherewith to light his darkness.

Zadoc. This, God only
Can do for mortals; but in this all men
Are equally dependent. He but asks
What He hath given: the imperfect will
He doth accept and strengthen; the dull wish
He with his Spirit quickens; He to prayer
Imparts its vital power and fervency.
From light to light, from faith to firmer faith,

He lifts the spirit toward the gate of heaven,
And with His breath of healing life renews
The striving, Spirit-seeking soul.

King.

Old man,

Thy words to me are idle. I have wandered
Even in the noon-day light, and may not hope
To walk in triple darkness aught more truly
Than in the day. There is no help for him,
The wretched man abandoned by the Lord!

Zadoc. The Lord abandons no man. He hath
power

And mercy, though thy sins as scarlet were,
To wash them whiter than the driven snow
On Ararat's high peak. But thou, O king,
Err not against thy knowledge. Thou well know'st
It is not given at once to honour Baal
And mock with prayer the God of Israel.
'Tis vain for man to take the downward road,
Then murmur if it leads not up to heaven.
Choose between God and Baal.

King (impatient.)

Now, enough!

Thou canst not fancy that thy trite allusions
Rouse aught but irritation, and exhaust
The frail endurance of a shattered brain.
Nay, my old friend, I mean thee no affront;

But words are needless : thou hast done thy part
Bravely and well, as best beseems thine office,
And so we part. (Retires.)

Zadoc (alone.) Ah, me ! what are the wise
But subtler fools, whose folly lies more deep,
O'erlaid by this world's specious fallacies !
False goods, false maxims, and unmeaning terms ;
A glittering tissue, frail as gossamer,
Yet hardly pervious to a ray of truth.
Man needs more mercy than he may conceive ;
For his best virtue needs much pardon still.
Alas for this sad hour ! But soon shall I
Find refuge with my fathers, and escape
The woes that threaten this unhappy land.

[*Scene changes.*

SCENE IV.—*Night. A Chamber in the King's House.*

The KING alone.

King. At last I am alone, and sadly free—for best
The heart may deal with its own bitterness,
And prove the refuge, which kings find not oft,
From counsel vain,—obtrusion of rebuke,

The oblique taunt, that masks itself in semblance
Of duty or of love ; the galling folly
Of simple-hearted honesty, which talketh
Of sin as if it were impossible,
And holiness as if it were the garment
Of this unrighteous world, and not its mask.
I daily madden from this hornet swarm,
That will not leave me rest ; for all, save rest,
The sunless, deep suspense of heart and brain,
Is but a foretaste of Gehenna's fire.
O for one hour's escape !—I would now give
This kingship for one hour's forgetfulness,
Though but the next were death—too happy death,
Could it but quench this fiery essence, life,
That burning on for ever may endure
Beyond the pangs of flesh. Each way in vain
I turn to seek a truce with thought, and fly
From my dark self—the inseparable horror
I bear about me * * *
That presses on my spirit * * *
* * * I have turned
From the endurance of my lonesome thoughts,
Which are as haunting demons, to confront
The eyes and tongues of men ; from these again
Back to the weary burden of my own

Black, self-tormenting fancy. * * *

* * * Still there is

A momentary ease in close encounter
 With other's folly ; and, a moment, feel
 Some gleam, though faint and feeble, of myself.
 Now—were it but an hour's relief—once more
 To hold dispute with that contentious Sceptic,
 Whose crafty drift I well may penetrate,
 And find some play in baffling. Strange it is
 How fools, who name themselves philosophers,
 Outstep their science ever ; and contemplating
 The measured combinations and results
 Of visible nature—should be blinded so,
 To that they all so plainly indicate,
 The ruling Purpose and creative Hand :
 Pronouncing the unknown, impossible ;
 For mystery, inventing explanation
 That leaves the darkness darker. This is vain.
 Now to recal the sage Chaldean Seer,
 I would try all things—were he now at call,
 It were some intermission to these dark
 And wearing meditations. Ho, again !
 Again uncalled— (Stranger enters.)

A strange coincidence !

Str. I come, for on my spirit sits a spell

Which binds me to thy royal will, and tells
The thoughts which wear with unavailing strife
Thy spirit striving with the bond of Fate,
Which chains alike the foolish and the wise,
The feeble and the strong. Thy course is written :
They only rest who strive not. Banish thought
And idle musing : Fate will guide thee on.

King. I think not, Stranger ; I am sick of thought,
And life with all its uses, and were glad
To part from weary consciousness of self,—
Vain questions and misgivings.

Str. Wisest King,
Trust me this is but sickness of the body,
Some foul congestion, which offends the brain,
Whose cause and cure within the stomach lies,
True seat of all that mortal dignifies
With lofty names of Reason, Will, Affection,
To exalt his being o'er his brother brute,
More wise in following Nature's gentle law :
All care is sickness, otherwise miscalled,
And curable where it begins ; by drug
Or grateful wine, or sleep—not heeding
The sophist's idle art. Thy need but asks
Somewhat to stir the languid blood, and warm
Thy stagnant vital juices.

King.

It may be :

I am not equal to this wordy war.

Thy words seem echoed by kind Nature's voice.

Str. Yield thou to Nature—'tis necessity,

Spoken by heart and nerve, and blood and brain,

For He thou namest thy Maker so decrees :

Thy nature is His will, graved in thy flesh ;

His law, as much as any in thy Tables,

Graved on stone only—only law in Jewry.

King. I pray, blaspheme not.*Str.*

Let it pass ; but think

Vain self-infliction is no part of wisdom,

Of which the reasonable end is good.

What was man made for else ? with soft desires

And aptitudes for pleasure, fine endowments,

And happiest apprehensions of delight,

And senses apt, for which the outer world

Is fitly framed and stored with all things needful

For each fine sense. Look round on every scene,

And say where sorrow and self-torment dwell

In living Nature's round. What shame it were

If he whose wisdom is the sage's lamp

Should sit alone within the prison-cell

Of a sick bosom's self-created love,

Steeped in dark dreams, while sunshine falls around,

Scared by black phantoms, while all around is light,
And peace, and joy, and beauty !

King.

Friend, I fear

There is no healing in the din of words.
The bosom pressed with its own consciousness,
Shrinks from the sad comparison that tells
All it has forfeited : the dungeon's gloom
Is doubly darkened by sad memory
Even of the common light of day without.

Str. How sad a counsellor is weariness,
Presenting thus the shadowy side of truth,
If it be truth, so seen ! Now pass we words
And thinking heals no sorrow. We for this
Must use the appointed medicine—mirth and music,
And renovating food, and wine created
To lift the sinking soul from heaviness ;—
Let these revive thy spirit ; wisdom then
Will speak her own true language.

King.

Truly, friend,

These common means ask no Chaldean art.

Str. The sage's art, O king, is known in using
Things common to uncommon purposes,
That add to mankind's sum of happiness,
Creation's aim, the end of all true wisdom :
The majesty of truth is in its use.

The sage is minstrel, chymist, conjuror ;
Can cure diseases, fabricate attire,
Compound new tastes or theories, or set
New creeds or dishes going.

King. All such arts

Are doubtless needful, but below the sage.

Str. Not as the sage can use them; give but
leave,

And thou shalt hear what may awake some wonder.

*[He waves his arm, and the chamber is filled
with sweet low voices.]*

Voices. The sphere moves on its calm

And silent axle round :

The heavens are breathing balm,

In quiet earth is bound,

And dewy slumber creeps

O'er every living thing ;

But wakeful sadness keeps

The heart of Salem's King.

Night—stars of heaven, infuse

Your calm and hallowed gleams ;

Sleep, come with healing dews,

And soft ecstatic dreams.

Meek Genius of the west,
That steals on silent wing,
Come hither—lull to rest
The heart of Salem's King !

King. I am amazed—
I have seen much of magic's juggling craft,
The powers and cheats of muttering sorcery,
And proved the wonders of alchemic lore ;
But ne'er till now beheld a trick of art
With such slight form of outward circumstance.
I comprehend thy smile : thine art, thou'lt say,
Is not the trick of Eastern sorcery.
Well, grant it not ; your spirits strangely err,
Calling on lifeless things, unconscious
Of sense or hearing.

Str. Question—they shall hear thee.

King. Mysterious singers—tell me what ye are,
Who call thus sweetly on inanimate things.
Mute Nature hath not ears—the stars hear not ;
Why call ye so on objects without life—
Night, stars of heaven, the winds ? If ye be not
Yourselves of spirit kind, no spirits hear
Save One—too dread for such imaginings !
Night, with its starry gloom, and grateful dews,

And fresh'ning airs, and holy lonesomeness,
And solemn bird, and far low-murmuring streams,
Are ever dear to song, and sweet to sense ;
But have no spirit in them, unless that
The mind's own vagrant sympathy bestows
On their unconscious beauty. What say ye ?

Voices. In the forest hast thou strayed,
At autumn-evening's fall,
And hath thy wandering footstep stayed,
And thine eye recoiled from the haunted shade,
At the spirits' whispered call ?
Hast thou felt a chill in that cold dim light,
At some shadow pale and grey,
That formless glides through the silent night ?
Or if spectral forms thy dream affright,
Wise mortal, what be they ?
Say, whence the thrill of mystic dread ?
Can warrior fear things still and dead ?

Thou ownest the secret moving power
Of terror, beauty, grace :
When Nature woos with breeze and flower,
When vales are bright and mountains tower,
The Genius of the place
Speaks, voiceless, to thy heart.

'Tis Nature's spirit language, far
Beyond the seer's or poet's art,
When fancies wild on fancies start,
Our utterings they are.

King. If so, then ye
Are but illusions—fantasies reflected
From the soul's self, and creatures of the mind
In its fantastic moods.

Str. O wisest King,
Thou art too subtle for these airy triflers,
Who dally with thy weariness. Apply
The truth thou speakest. What are griefs and joys
But the mind's moods reflected on itself?
External brightness is but inward ease;
Care casts its shadow on the noonday sun:
Be joyous, and the noon of night will laugh;—
Thus read the moral of the song.

King. In truth
Their music much excels thy sophistry;
For either cheat there were small need, if sorrow
Could be at will transmuted into joy.

Str. It may be conquered, which were worthier;
But for all useful ends the wise find means.
Behold the grand specific!—wine is strength,

The fount of wisdom and true fortitude,

(Fills a crystal cup and holds it to the light.)

That cast aside slow doubt. Pure golden tide!

In which meek evening's modest beam exults,

And dancing revels in thy wave of bliss;

Thou hast a life within thee, swift to glide

Through the dull mazes of the saddest heart,

Driving away all sorrow. Thy rich fume

Spreads its high fragrance to this lofty roof.

Come, test its healing virtue.

(Holds the cup to the King, who seems to hesitate.)

Nay, fear not,

But freely drink. 'Tis wholesome wine of Shiraz—

Good Persian, by its sparkle. * * *

* * * There; well done.

The noble cordial bravely doth its work.

I see the rush of new-born life distilling

A regal crimson o'er thy face and brow.

Now dost thou look as the sage King, of whom

The Orient rings so loudly. Now I see

The fair Sabeau majesty's desire.

King. Most sage old seer, thy medicine exalts

The sense of wisdom and the vital power,

And brightens all the faculties beyond

The power of Egypt's musty conjurings.

Str. Said I not truly?

King.

True, illustrious magian.

I feel the vital essence circulate
Fresh gladness through life's issues ; and begin
To feel how vain the weary waste of thought ;
How looking back on gone-by things is idle.

Str. More truth was never spoken ; but drink on,
Improve the inspiring lesson.

King.

What was that

Bright liquor which methinks I saw thee drop,
Like glittering sparks of sunshine, in the eup?

Str. Wisely divined ! true sunshine, as thou sayest,
Drawn from the fount above of light and life
By thrice great Hermés, our immortal master :
Its end is purer life and deeper knowledge.

King. Nay, rather mirth, and gay abandonment
Of every sober care—

Str.

Sure end of wisdom !

All earth-born care, O King, is vanity,—
The toil of thought, which leads to no result,
But wastes the present, and leaves gloom behind.
The present moment is the wise man's life ;
The future is not, and the past is gone.
Time is a running line of atom instants—
Some bright, some black, some glad or sorrowful.

The worst is by the wise man soon let pass,
 The happiest most enjoyed—the end unheeding ;
 Which Fate or Fortune in good time must settle.
 Fools speculate on far contingencies,
 Which rarely happen until life run by.

King. Thy meditations have a pleasing touch
 Of that mock-wise loquacity which wine
 Is aptest to inspire. It doth not need
 One half thy prosing rhetoric to prove
 The wit by wine inspired. I would prefer
 A little folly from thy tuneful imps
 To speak its inspiration. They can best
 Dress in light song the bubbles of the brain,
 Which otherwise dance madly.

Str. They, O King,
 Are but the creatures of thy sovereign will,
 And present at thy word.

(Stranger waves his arm, and the voices fill the room.)

Voices. Now mirth is awaking,
 And labour is still,
 Soft moonlight is breaking
 O'er forest and hill;
 And beauty walks forth in the planet's soft light,
 For the dawn of young love is the dewfall of night.

Where Kedron's green billows
Leap sparkling along,
From the depth of its willows
Soft gushes of song
Pour, hushing the wild with enchantment divine,
For all song is silent, soft warbler, but thine!

And Echo, repeater
Of every strain,
Who flings it back sweeter
And softer again :
The spirits of air give a fainter reply,
And the still depths of ether respond with a sigh.

The glad earth is flinging
Fresh scent on the gale,
From roses new springing
Down Hinnom's sweet vale ;
Where the night flower's pale smile glimmers up thro'
the dew,
By the stars faintly tinged with their mystical hue.

But haste !—with new fleetness
The happy hour flies ;

O waste not the sweetness

Too swiftly that dies !

Dull Care like a guest uninvited doth run,—

The delicate spirit of bliss must be won !

King. My breast is over-full : I pray you, leave me

(Stranger disappears.)

To hold communion with these pleasing thoughts,

Which rush upon me with power long unknown—

Ha ! gone ? I saw not how,—or can the senses

Be thus the captives of a waking dream,

So strange to life's experience, yet so like

The seemings of reality ? The scene,

With all things round, is palpably familiar :

Can shadows vain so haunt the waking sense ?

(Approaches an open lattice.)

There is a sweetness in the night. I'll taste it.

The dream brought healing, if a dream it were,

And leaves a dance of feelings in my breast

Too gay for mere illusion ; or if so,

All that conveys delight is fair illusion.

All is as fancy paints it, and the sense

Yields to receive the coloured outward shapes

Of what we deem reality. The scene

Which now before me spreads so fair, where sleeps

The moonlight over streets and terraces,
 And tracts of bowery distance far retiring,
 Where shadowy masses blend with fading light,
 As if calm sleep and death together meeting,
 Lay spent in conflict of their elements,
 Which should be deemed the gentlest—what are they
 More than a lovely dream, which the dull truth,
 With morning's first grey gleam, shall disenchant
 Into the trite and base realities?—
 Dark roofs, poor tents, rude paths, and sun-dried fields,
 Now merged in yonder soft obscurity,
 Which lies like sleep around their nakedness.
 So ends the painted phantom of man's life!
 Yet wherefore seek this knowledge? Why believe
 Yon beautiful expanse of moonlight scenes
 Less than their lovely seeming? It is well
 To be so cheated: were all dreams thus bright!
 Yet is it strange, that scene of solemn beauty
 Should wake these dull imaginings. * * *

* * * On the air

A far low murmur from the villages
 Of Judah's land, by distance and the breeze
 Attempered into concert with the streams,
 Comes blended on the ear from many a vale.
 And now soft music on the air of night

Pours its low modulations from afar,
So faint, the listener scarce can deem he waketh,
But lists in sleep the visionary song
Which binds the soul of Nature in repose.

[*Scene changes.*]

SCENE V.—*A Garden in the Suburbs.*

QUEEN TAMAR *and* ATTENDANTS.

Tam. It may not be ! Your low sweet voices pour
A momentary soothing ; but 'tis vain,
My heart hath long resigned the dream of hope
For aught to cheer the desert of this life.
My dream, of joy was short and soon awakened,
But sorrow hath been a perpetual guest
For long and mournful winters—yet to me
Familiar : 'twere easier to endure
The touch, tho' sharp, of merely selfish woes.
I freely had resigned my breast to wrongs,
And taken sorrow—for a guide to heaven ;
But as my spirit nears life's weary end,
It hath more grieved for others, sadly fearing
The wrath to come on Israel's wanderings,
Neglectful of the Covenant in which

It claims to stand protected ; the sole refuge
Of those who hold the truth of God on earth,
Now blindly swerving to Idolatry.

But Heaven will guard its own ; and ah ! too surely
Deal righteous vengeance on the guilty head.

* * * But why should I bewail the nation's
danger,

I who of all that live have most endured
From my lost lord's desertion ? O, I've wept
Till the exhausted fount of tears grew dry,
And the tired brain grew clouded. Reason's light
Was for that season mercifully darkened ;
For it was mercy, when my sorrows grew
Too painful for the spirit tortured so
To bear and live.

Att. (sing.) Yon cypress lifts its graceful height
Through darkness to the starry heaven,
And from it the sweet bird of night
Pours forth the song of placid Even :
So meek and lowly sweet it falls,
That one might deem on heaven it calls.

Deep silence else enchains the calm,
Untroubled hour of sleep,

Save where we walk with plaint and psalm,
And they who wake to weep :
We tread the hallowed paths around,
As they who walk on holy ground.

Ye angels pure, who watch unseen,
Guardians of Salem's holy hill,
And hover through the clear serene
To guard its roofs from nightly ill ;
If peace and love be of your train,
O bid them to our hearts again!

Tam. 'Tis a calm eve, and doth, in spite of sorrow,
Refresh the fevered breast : the sunless west
Breathes over the parched earth, while gradual Night,
Upstarting from her day-long rest, unfolds
Her sentinel eyes above, which now look down
Successive from their posts, as if to keep
Her stillness unperturbed, in which sad thoughts
Possess the soul, and dreams of parted joy,
Which are themselves a star-light, faint and far
Seen through the darkness of life's length of days—
Ah me—so dark—so endless !

Cho. They endure
In the fierce trial of adversity,
Whom God doth favour most, and walk forth pure

From the red furnace ; thenceforth become free
From the world's vain defilement, and serene
As all that frets the bosom ne'er had been.

Tam. (*not listening.*) Yet have I known
Most nameless consolations, dreams too wild
To be wished back when gone ; for so it was
In that strange interval of life, I sunk
In some wild visionary void, and felt
Soothed by fantastic nothings. These soon passed,
Leaving no trace upon the memory
But that they were. 'Twere sin to wish them back ;
Yet, when they left me, with more lifelike thoughts
Pain hath revived.

Cho. In deep affliction's troubled hour,
When sorrow rules the breast,
And earthly soothing hath no power
To quiet its unrest ;
When mirth but maketh jarring din,
And all is heaviness within ;

To thee we fly, O God, to thee !
When earth denies relief,
And still more tremulously flee
In storms of deeper grief :

When all around to darkness turns,
Thine heaven-sent light more brightly burns.

Tam. (*not heeding.*) For grant that all his love came
back, O never
Can that sweet trust, the soul of love, return
To this crushed heart, in which all earth-born hope
Has perished !

Cho. O Queen, it is not well
For those who sorrow, to drive hope away :
Hope beams with cheering ray
Into the lone dim cell
Upon the weary captive's tedious hours ;
Even in the dungeon gloom to softly tell
The hope of outer day,
Slanting athwart the dim vault's dusky grey,
To glad the sight
With airy gleam of freedom's glorious light.

Tam. Your tongues grow wanton, children. Alas !
where,
In what fond bosoms of this woe-worn earth
Can these light fancies live ? I must forget them.
These hopes are flown to heaven. And yet in truth
This gentle eve recalls them half,—so soft

With dewy sweetness, on the night air breathing
Through forest, field, and woody wilderness,
From flow'ry Hermon to the roseate wild
Of Sharon and of Hinnom. Haply, now
In yon suburban outlet many an eye
Looks out on the sweet night, and fondly dreams
Of frail and perishing pleasures, reading blindly
The solemn glories of yon holy vault
Into most earthly meanings, best forgotten
Before its all-pure spirit. Merciful
But just Chastizer of the sinful breast,
If young unbroken spirits in their hour
Of vanity forget Thee, O ! not thus
Thou in thy wrath consume them, as I wither
For too much resting in this world's vain trust !
Strike not the lowly tamarisk with the bolt
That cleaves the mountain cedar, which stands bare,
Leafless and blighted, in the healthful breeze
Which breathes around it vainly—never more
To bud new verdure.

Cho. In vain, with wandering fancy she would win
Brief respite from sad thought,
The pang her woes have wrought.
Still memory unsubdued holds rule within

With heady force,
Even as the current turns the pilot's course
To the fell cliff unsought.

But, stay ! she speaks—

Tam.

It was a night

Most like to this in loveliness, when we,
All jubilant with nuptial gaiety,
Saw Salem rise in prospect, and its towers
Limned darkly on the golden dusk. Then he
Stood pointing out its templed height afar,
Shadowed beneath the gorgeous base of heaven,
And bade the minstrels strike the sounding chord
To joyful measures known in Solyma,
And canticles of love to wretched me !
O, it was madness then ! but so it seemed,
Heaven smiled ; the dim earth, touched with the soft
echoes,

Glimmered mysterious transport : all appeared
As if no sorrow could obtrude again
Into so sweet a world. So joy deceives ;
So to the happy all speaks happiness.—
But, list ! what accents of shrill discord break
This still, contemplative twilight ! Listen, friends.

Cho. The heathen now with impious clamour meet

To pay foul offering to the rising Moon,
And with accursèd orgies dissonant
Salute the unconscious orb which God hath made,
As Queen of Heaven—loudly triumphing
As if heaven heard not—unavenged.

Tam. Heaven surely hears, but not
With mortal's erring vengeance; nor adopts
Our passion to chastise what we condemn.
Man, to all sins abandoned, oft would call
Down fire from heaven on other's sin, and blast
Whom he should but rebuke in mild compassion,
Were his thoughts lightning. Woe is me, 'tis well
They are not!

Cho. Yet might even angels weep
To see the ungodly triumph, while the just
Still suffer, and yet sadly hold their trust,
And, wondering, ask how long will Justice sleep.

Tam. They know not God who trust not;—but
again
Harsh music wounds the ear from yonder height.

Att. Let us away, that we may curse them not!

[*Scene changes.*]

PART THE THIRD.

SCENE I.—*The King's House. Morning.*

The KING, asleep; ATTENDANTS.

King (asleep). Be merciful, Jehovah !

1st Att. So, he dreameth.

2nd Att. See how he writhes. His features are distorted.

'Twere good he were awakened.

King. Spare, O spare !

1st Att. Ho, my lord King !

2nd Att. Awake, O King, awake !

King. Mercy, mercy, mercy !

1st Att. O King, arouse thee !

King (awaking). Ha ! who is near ?

2nd Att. Thy faithful slaves, O King.

King. Where am I ? Ha ! 'tis morning light !

Quick, say

Heard ye or saw ye aught ?

1st Att. Nought, truly, King.

King. I was then in a dream—a dark mysterious dream.

I think ye did look strangely terrified,

As having gazed on somewhat. It must be—
Ye surely must have heard that Voice ; more awful
Than loudest thunder, when the hollow vault
Seems rending by the crash. And still
Your looks bespeak some recent fear.

1st Att.

We heard

Thee only uttering cries of fearful import,
And hastened straight to wake thee.

King.

Cried I aloud?

2nd Att. Loud as one striving in some deadly grasp,
Beyond description fearful.

King.

Such it was.

I joy to see your well-known countenance,
And the pale morning light. I yet do tremble.
I would not sleep again for wealth of Ophir !
Lift up yon curtain. Ha ! the air smells sweetly ;
The sun is not yet risen:

1st Att.

The red east

Glow with the promise of a cheerful morn.

King. In living Nature's compass there is nought
That bears remote similitude to that
Most terrible Voice and Eye.—Can sleep alone
Create what Nature knows not ? or wild Fancy,
Distorting Nature in her maddest moods,
Shape with such truthful seeming ? What is power

If kings can be so haunted, and chained down
Within the prison house of sleep !

2nd Att.

O King,

Arise ! come forth ! shake off the mists of slumber
Which yet surround thy pillow—see young morn
Gleams through the lattice softly.

King.

Morn is dark

To fear-struck conscience as the night's dark noon.

[*Enter the AFFLICTING ANGEL, invisibly.*

Affl. An. Thy soul is forfeit, Solomon.

King.

Alas !

My inward thoughts rebel, and seem to utter
Strange hostile voices, as an inward spirit
Taking the will by force. O, could I fly
This painful Being, though to die !

Affl. An.

Thou'lt soon

Find terrors darker than thy darkest thoughts.

King. O for some cavern in the ocean's deep,
Where devils may forget me, for they live
To haunt high places and the roof of kings !

Affl. An. Their temple is the godless breast : in vain
Thou seekest to fly thyself.

King

O could I fly myself !

O for the privilege to lay down life
More fearful than the tomb !

Affl. An.

There devils haunt.

King. But who can say what spectres haunt the tomb,
In the abyss of darkness punishing
The deeds they prompted with angelic face.

1st Att. How black his visage grows !—his countenance

Seems scarcely human. (*Aside.*)

2nd Att. Breathe not, for his eye
Turns this way, searching in the empty air
For some invisible Power.

1st Att. He doth listen.

King. If ye be cursing, curse aloud. I'll hear ye,
Were your tongues scorpions, freely—rather
Than this malignant stillness.

(*Surveying grimly.*) Well, why mute ?

Affl. An. If curses can bring comfort, be content :
A nation's curses, deep, sincere, and just,
Breath'd up against thee, reach the gates of heaven.

2nd Att. Sure something evil lurketh in this place:
A sense of awe surrounds us, and the dread
Of some mysterious Presence.

1st Att. Peace, be silent.

King. Ay, even so ; all curse, tho' not aloud,
On me, the centre of all earthly hate
And heavenly displeasure. Slaves, come hither :
What do ye mutter there among yourselves ?

2nd Att. O King, come forth ! something of evil
kind

Lurks in this place. Come up ; the sunny roof
Looks brightly o'er the land, and there behold
Heaven's sunshine on that glorious work of thine,
Thy Temple—thy great offering to the Lord.

Affl. An. And that confronting roof, on Gerizim,
Thy offering to Baal.

King. Ye are devils !

Have ye no sword, or javelin, to strike with ?
If ye are murderers, I sit ready here.

Affl. An. Alas ! thy soul is ripe for the abyss.

2nd Att. His features grow contracted, and assume
A stony hardness. [*AFFL. ANGEL departs.*]

1st Att. He must die, unless
This raving fit departeth.

2nd Att. Lo ! a step.

[*Enter TAMAR.*

1st Att. 'Tis Egypt's hapless daughter.

2nd Att. Ah, how changed !

1st Att. All save in goodness.

(*Tamar stands as if stupefied.*)

See, she fain would speak :
How wildly bright that sorrow-speaking eye !
Her pale lips tremble faintly.

2nd Att.

See, the King

Looks fixed on vacancy, like one bereft

Of all perception. He beholds her not.

1st Att. Be silent : now she speaketh.

Tam. (breathlessly.)

My lord King !

He doth not hear. Alas ! he knows not me.

He hath forgotten all. O, can it be

Thus clean forgotten !—thou who hast ever been

My heart's one thought next God—forgotten so !

I am thy Tamar !

2nd Att.

O, most honoured Princess,

The King is not his wonted self ; some dream

Hath so disturbed his reason. He is scared

By some imagined spectre.

Tam. (not heeding.)

O, my King !

I come to share thy sorrows, not to chide,

Or wring forced kindness from an altered mind.

O King, look back on better days gone by !

Think all I was to thee when thou wert happy !

Look, what thy hate hath made of her who loved thee !

Ah me, that still cold eye !

1st Att. (aside.) At last he looks ,

As one who sees, yet hears not, nothing moved.

Alas, poor Princess ! Scarce her trembling limbs

Support her sinking frame. Her bosom panteth

As if nigh bursting.

2nd Att.

How she gasps for breath !

I'll speak to her. O Princess ! let thy servant
Offend not, offering water from the brook
To cool thy fevered lips.

Tam. (not heeding.) O, but one look,—

See here how sorrow withers, in the strife
Of crushed affection ! * * *

(The King looks with an absent gaze.)

* * * List, and I will tell thee

A tale of more than mortal suffering,
All for thy sad desertion. The gazelle,
The savage of the desert, hath shed tears
Upon me gazing, in those dreadful hours ;
For I have wandered many a lone wild way,
In solitary places where nought human
Dared stand beneath the sun's all-burning noon ;
Still calling on thy name, till the fixed cry
Became the heart's sad life, and all beside
Were but as portion of the one wild woe,
The spirit of the blighted world, pervaded
By my one sole all-shadowing despair,
With which all darkened. On the wailing winds
Sad whisperings came across the sea-like sands
Of the flat desert, and the empty caves
Howled back portentous echoes from the shore

Of Sodom's gloomy waters. Oft I thought
These melancholy waters smiled to see
A form more blighted, and a breast containing
A deeper spring of bitterness. At last
There came the touch of that mild sympathy
Which ever dwells in Nature. Oft while roaming,
Borne on the wing of visionary thought,
To the attending ear of gentle Night
Was sung my hapless fortune ; and I thought
The constellations still remembered me—
Even since I was a child in Pharaoh's land
I knew and loved them—for they were unchanged,
And shed their cooling dew on my parched brain :
For tears had ceased, and sorrow had become
A wild and terrible mirth ; and for a season
Life was a dream that left no certain record.
It was a painful waking, such as comes
Upon the morrow of some dire event,
Bringing the dread reality ;—alas !
There are not words to sound the gloomy depths
Of human woe, for they are bottomless
As the black deep of Hades !—but 'twas o'er,
And still returning Reason brought no peace
To comfort the sick heart.

Ah me ! he heeds not.

1st Att. (*aside*.) What sorrow can be with that woe
compared,

When the loved eye grows cold and strange !

2nd Att. Be still !

Tam. O must I leave thee thus ! Remember how
We twain were once one soul ! O look on me !

(*Breaks into lamentation.*)

1st Att. There comes a living lustre on his face ;
His eye grows heedful, and his lips dispart.

2nd Att. Stay, Princess—list one moment !

1st Att. He looks on thee,
And tries for speech.

King. I know not if I live,
Or have departed to the land of shades,
The realm of gloomy Hades. What are ye,
Whose terror-stricken faces dimly gaze
Through the infernal mist, like suffering spirits?
Your idols cannot save ye now ;—and yet
I heard a voice, too hallowed to be here
Among the guilty. * * *

* * * These are shapes of life,
And gleams of upper day. O, friends !

1st Att. O King,
Behold who stands beside thee ! Princess, speak.

Tam. (*still weeping*). My hapless lord, one look !

2nd Att.

He sees her now,

With gaze of recollection. Memory
Wakes at the spell of that familiar voice,
That thrills on the old bosom-chord, and calls
Old harmonies to life.

King.

Thou must be Tamar !

Or else, if not, thou'rt haply of the train
Whose errands are of mercy. Yet why here
Among the irrevocably damned ?

1st Att.

O friends,

His reason is clean gone !

2nd Att.

Hush, hush !

King.

And yet

Heaven's angels weep not so, nor bear the stamp
Of mortal agonies on their sweet brows.

Tamar. They have not known this killing agony !
They have not known vain earthly love, or seen
The lover's eye grown strange and cold, or felt
Confiding fondness on itself thrown back.

King. My injured Tamar, it is even thou !

[*Scene changes.*]

SCENE II.—*Mount Olivet. The worshippers of Astarte are assembled on the summit. A brazen Altar, on which a fire is burning.*

PRIESTESS, JERADA, &c.

Jer. Now venerable mother, wherefore thus,
Doth some strange dulness cloud our solemn rite?
Do we not meet in triumph—conquerors
Of the insulting Hebrew and his God,
Too long ascendant o'er the Gentile race,
The servants of great Baal? Why thus pale?
Ye look like felons all.

Pr. The signs are evil :
The sacred tapers burn with ghastly paleness,
The image of the Virgin Queen is bathed
With a chill moisture. On each heart there is
The shade of coming ill.

Jer. My heart disclaims
These ill-timed bodings : they but wrong the Queen
Astarte, from her Eastern chamber rising
To claim her ancient sceptre, and assert
The cause of all the gods.

Pr. Nay, Princess, see
Yon heavy mist from Siloa's valley rising

Between us and the virgin majesty,
Shadowing the plain beneath.

Jer.

But not on us.

We stand in her propitious smile—the goddess
Frowns upon godless Israel.

Pr. (starting.)

Heard ye aught?

A Sidonian. Nought now. Some minutes past I
heard

The distant murmur as of many voices
Gathering upon the plain.

Another.

I heard the same,

Rising and falling on the fitful breeze,
And swelling in the silent intervals
Of our own choral chant.

Pr.

Nay, hark again! (*A pause.*)

1st Sid. I heard low signals, faintly audible,
As from the cliffy steeps and thickets near.

Jer. Fear magnifies! These noises all are proof
Of our security. Ye did but hear
Our sentinels upon their post, accosting
Each one his fellow watcher.

Pr.

I mistrust

These Hebrew watchers! List—what cry was there?
That was no friendly sound!

2nd Sid.

I heard a whispering

Close by yon mossy crag.

Pr. Who struck the censer ?

Sid. The censer was untouched. A brassy sound
Rung sharply from yon thicket.

Pr. Noble Princess,
'Tis time we were away ; there's danger near !

Jer. We may not choose a fitter place to die
Than at this altar.

1st Sid. See, the moon is darkened ! [recess

2nd Sid. There's somewhat shining from yon dark
Among the bushes.

Pr. 'Tis a warning gleam,—
The fire's reflection from some burnished casque
Or pointed steel. I counsel swift retreat,
If yet we may.

Jer. 'Tis but the prying gleam
Of some o'er-curious sentry on his post.
These fears offend the Virgin majesty.
Be cheered, and all is well. Come, raise a loud
And joyous choral cry, and with one voice
Throw off this shameful panic.

*[They strike up a loud hymn to Astarte, during which
the Hebrews rush in from the surrounding crags
and thickets, and overturn the altar. A faint
resistance is made, and the Sidonians are routed
and scatter down the mount.*

SCENE III.—*Dawn. A retired glade on the same hill—*JERADA *is borne in by her Attendants, faint and suffering pain.*

Jer. Here let me rest, these pains can fear no foe
Here, on this grassy mound.

Att. But three steps onward
A mossy trunk lies fallen upon the steep;
Its massive branches form a throne-like seat,
Where thou can'st rest at ease.

Jer. A throne, good Miriam,
Is not a chair of rest; yet well may serve,
As oft of old, to die on. Oh, my side!

Att. My Princess suffers only cruel fatigue.

Jer. Nay, nay. My gentle Miriam, this is Death
Sits down before life's fortress. I must die,
Even on this goodly throne thy love hath found me.

Att. O my dear mistress!

Jer. Prythee, weep not, maiden.
I would not have thee cloud my latter moments
With mortal weakness. Rather let us triumph;
I for the Virgin Queen of heaven am crowned
A glorious martyr. Come, now smile, my maiden.
Ah, ah, 'twas a sharp pang!

* * See in the grass

Yon small bright wreath of sweet and tender flowers,
Starring the lively green, like a gay freak
Of hope in life's young spring.

Att. Some mountain blossoms !

In these hills common.

Jer. Well, whate'er they be,

I pray you pluck them tenderly, and weave them
Into a chaplet with this slender branch,
And place it on my brow, as thou can'st well,
So as may grace a victor's death. * *

* * So, well.

Att. Were it not well from this lone spot to seek
Some sheltering roof?—the dawning hour is chill.
I'll gently help thee down the deep descent,
And we shall haply meet some friendly arm
Still hidden in the neighbouring copse beneath.

Jer. It may not be ; among yon hostile roofs
Not one shall more shut out the light of day,
The face of Baal, from these afflicted eyes,
Now soon to close on every mortal care,
And on this hated and unfriendly land.
I would collect my thoughts, and calmly settle
The obtrusive doubts and painful memories
Which press upon my bosom, and disturb

The calm and high serenity of one
Whose duty to the gods is bravely done.
Here let me meet death's messenger, as bravely
As I have met their enemies: and here,
During the heavy hours of summer day
Now opening slowly, she for whom I die
May send some favouring sign to cheer and soothe
My parting moments, with a high assurance
Of glad reception in the starry courts
Where heroes dwell with Jove.

* * * Nay, weep not, maiden,
But go and leave me, for I must be lone.
At eve thou mayest return; till then
Keep faithful silence. Thou wilt then find here
All that of me remains, in life or death.

[*Scene changes.*

SCENE IV.—*Before the Temple.*

WATCHMAN—LEVITES, *meeting.*

1st Lev. Ho, Watchman! Thou hast heard the
clamorous din,
Which hath so awfully disturbed the night?

Watch. I were deaf else. It came upon the ear
From yonder eastern summit.

1st Lev. Hast thou noted
Aught to explain so loud and strange report?

Watch. Yes, many from the very scene have passed,
Strangers and men of Judah—some in terror,
Excited all, as from some recent fray—
But clamouring as they thronged upon the street,
While hardly could aught certain be collected
From the discordant medley of mixed voices.
Some quarrelled as they came—some uttered shouts
Of drunken triumph; flushed and blood-stained
faces

Told plainly of some deed of violence.

2nd Lev. Spoke you with none, nor tried to gain
Somewhat more special?

Watch. As I could gather,
A mighty concourse from the neighbouring towns
And streets suburban, in the middle watch
Assembled to assail the heathen meeting;
And, guided by their howling blasphemies
In honour of the Moon, surprised their gathering,
And scattered them with slaughter.

1st Lev. Say you, slaughter?

Watch. Report hath numbered some few slain.

'Tis said the Tyrian Princess hath been seen
Borne slain, or hurt'd sorely, from the press.

1st Lev. Sir, this were sad. I would it were not so :
She hath a noble nature, though obscured
By the blind superstition of her country.

2nd Lev. 'Tis said her clearer reason hath been
striving
Against that baseless faith in stock and stone—
The lying legends of idolatry.

1st Lev. There is not in the human heart a strength
To break the bond of habit—less, perchance,
The pride of party worship, and the names
Which rabble faction gilds its idols with.
Yet doth a nobler essence dwell within
The soul of constancy to home-taught error
And faith to honoured names—if but sincere,
And stained by no base aim of avarice
Or sordid self-ambition.

2nd Lev. If she die,
One good may follow—if the royal dotage
Be from her hurtful influence set free.

[Scene changes.]

SCENE V.—*King's House.*

KING, TAMAR.

Tam. There is no ground for such dread apprehension.

The judgment comes not till the trial ends.
The holiest mortal had been lost indeed
Beyond redemption, could not mercy pardon
While life is left for penitence.

King. This may be
For less offenders. I stand dreadly lone,
In a pre-eminence of sacred trust
To Satan's self against the Lord betrayed.

Tam. Great was the sin, but sin it were to deem
Sin cannot be forgiven.

King. Alas! Tamar,
Sin needs atonement by the eternal law
Which rules the heaven and earth, and binds the
justice
Of the All-Ruler. This, man cannot make,
Himself judged forfeit, unless one be found
Spotless and holy, and of worth to weigh
Against a world's transgression.

Tam.

In the heaven

There's love to rescue a poor contrite soul
From that cruel grasp ; and if thy guess be true,
That Man will yet by love divine be sought—
And glorious expiation free the world
From him who dares the Omnipotent.
Thy part is but contrition.

King. Listen, Tamar,
And thou shalt hear a dream.

Tam. Oh ! put no faith
In the delirious phantasies which crossed
Thy fevered sleep's distemper, doubtless swayed
By recollections stamped within the brain,
When conscience plays the part of fancy, shaping
To fearful forms the dim ungoverned movings
Of the still wakeful functions of the mind.

King. Asleep or waking, mortal man is ever
The sport of error and of vain illusion ;
But, granting all thou sayest, not the less
May He who made the thinking part of man
To yield obedience to the unbidden seizure
Of dreaming phantoms, so employ the same
To bear true intimations of His will
For menace or for warning—oftenest
Speaking to mortal man in mystic guise,
Most apt and safe for man's infirmity,

That which to waking sense were present death.
But only hear, and judge. I'll tell thee all,
Beginning in due order. Overnight,
Fevered with short and unrefreshing sleep,
I started up, to cool my burning temples
In the free air. Softly the gentle night
Rolled westward in its starry course; the land
Lay sleeping in the moonlight; all was still,
Save whispering leaves and distant murmuring waters.
Refreshed and soothed in the pure air, I sat
Wondering, and pleased to feel at last so free
From agonising thought, and deeply charmed
In the sweet quiet of the lonely hour,
When sleep fell o'er me, so entranced: but not
The slumber meet to follow such calm mood—
'Twas a black plunge into a dread abyss
Of horrors past Conception's power—a dream
Beyond the scope of slumber terrible:
I yet scarce dare to speak it!

Tam.

Pains imparted

Grow lighter to the heart.

King.

Well. Scarcely sleep

Had closed the external senses, and shut out
The fading images, dissolving all
To formless shadows,—sudden from the swarm

Of unshaped, nameless, and receding things,
Each darker and more wild, a heavy tramp
Of some unnatural footsteps, slow and ponderous,
Came up the stairs of hell, with solemn echo
That seemed to grow more near. I seemed awake
Within the realm of dreams, and still of self
Intensely conscious. As the earthquake's shock
Moves the still mirror of a glassy lake,
And rocks its faint reflections to confusion,
Thus strangely did that footfall shake my spirit
Into a chaos of wild terrors. Next
Came voices uttering moans of agony,
Followed by imprecations long and loud ;
And then came spectral shapes—fiends undisguised—
Grim Dagon—horrid Moloch—Astoreth—
And myriad more infernal faces, rising
Like smoke from the infernal Pit,
Rolled densely up with black variety,
Suspending terror in its ghastly spell.
A little while this lasted ; then, as many
Confused reflections settle into form
On the subsiding waters, so ceased all,
And one dark Shape before me stood alone,
Summing their horrors in its dreadful self.
It spoke not ; but the terrible eye expressed

What language may not utter—the dread spell
Which draws the trembling victim to the danger
From which it shrinks dismayed—a glance
That murders hope—for in that stony face
Relentless cruelty and changeless hate
Sate like eternal night. I could not turn,
Nor dared even think, lest that malignant eye
Might catch the movement of my thoughts. At
last

I summoned courage, and a scarce-formed prayer
Rose from my prostrate spirit. Suddenly,—
'Twas but a heart-beat, still it seemed
To bring a wondrous change,—swifter than thought
The depth of darkness grew more bright than day ;
The shadowy fiend of night with night was gone—
A glance beheld, and lost it. In its place,
Mailed with a loftier terror, stood a Form
Bright as a Prince of Heaven, with front that
bore

Supreme command, and awful eye that seemed
To sum infinity, and glance quite through,
Even to the inmost lurking cell of sin.
I stood abashed and terrified, desiring
For triple darkness, to escape that Eye ;
But darkness fled before it, and disguise

Left bare the dismayed spirit. Then arose
A still small voice, uttering these direful words—
“These are thy gods, whose altars thou dost build
Upon my holy hills. Now, hear thy sentence :
Whereas thou wert exalted and endowed
Above all earthly kings, and art found faithless,
Thy kingdom shall be rent, and by thy sons
A broken sceptre shall be handed down
Until the end. And thou thyself shalt be
A proverb and a warning for the wise
Of every generation, to distrust
In power and riches without faith in Him
From whom all power is given.” Swift as it
came

That Eye was gone, that fearful burden ended.
A glimmering light of earthly twilight trembled
Upon my opening eyelids ; and I strove
To lift my voice in some convulsive cry ;
But yet feel that tremendous Presence here,
And deem it not unreal.

Tamar.

Take comfort, King.

If this was, as I deem, a warning vision,
Warnings are not in judgment but in mercy
Sent to the favoured when they walk astray,
As wisest mortal may. When Supreme will

Aims final punishment, 'tis not in dreams.—
The earth cleaves, or the messenger of wrath
Strikes the devoted breast.

King. Such reasonings

Impart small comfort to the self-accused.
I might submissively endure the lash
My own offence has on myself drawn down,
But sink beneath the unmeasured consequence
Upon my race, my people, and the land
So favoured—yet for me abandoned
To suffer for the guilty ruler's sin.
Shall Israel execrate my name throughout
All ages of the world?

Tam. Thou for thyself
Ask grace in low humility and trust.
Leave Israel to Him whose steadfast plan
Is not to be disturbed by mortal error.
He will set right a nation's guilt, or man's,
With equal ease ; and to His final ends
Bend human sins or virtues—measuring not
By consequence or partial incident ;
Too little in the sum of infinite
And power supreme, to stay or rectify
Whatever errs, through space or time, a world,
Or mortal human atom of earth's dust.

King. Thou reasonest not unwisely ; but, alas !
This guilty consciousness must vainly seek
For consolation in the vast expanse
Of infinite perfection. The vast whole
May keep its boundless order, and be right,
Yet that small atom feel its agony.

Tam. That agony, if sorrow for offence,
Is but the dawn of holy penitence,
Precursor of a change—itself the working
Of power divine upon the human breast—
Not mortal wisdom, but in mercy given,
And leading to forgiveness. Think not more
Of Israel ; God will work His own wise will,
Whether in wrath or mercy, for His people,
By thee or else by others.

King. Israel
Is henceforth nought to me nor I to Israel.
I was but tyrant of the hour. Ere night
There may be some confusion in the council,
Striving who shall be master. I sit yet
Where I have sinned, breathing the moment's
air.

Where shall to-morrow find me !

Tam. O dismiss
These madd'ning fancies ! Give thy heart to Him

Who holds thee in His hand. The penitent
Ne'er rose unpardoned yet—kneel here with me!

[Scene changes.

SCENE VI.—*A lonely thicket ; JERADA seated, as in
former Scene.*

Jer. I would not, if I might, outlive this day
For Israel's throne. I bear within me wounds
To which the assassin's blow is but a salve,
And aught that pains the flesh but balm and oil.
Never shall I descend alive; and here
I deem it best in peace to die, apart
From all unloved and hostile eyes. Ere night
I shall be in Elysium. * * *

* * * Yet, methinks

I do not feel my wonted confidence.
'Tis fearful to stand thus upon the shore
Of the dark ocean, from which none return
To tell the hopes or terrors of the way,
Without some sensible assurance. * * Baal!
And thou, bright Virgin of the silver car,
Who now begins to pale amid the cold,
Grey twilight of the west,—fair Queen of heaven,
If ye be truly gods, and I have not

Sold life for a chimera—if I have
 Been loyal to my fathers' faith, and served ye
 Even against reason and the volumed scroll
 Of Hebrew records, and the wondrous deeds
 Of him the insolent Hebrews call their God ;
 If honour, influence, and pride of place
 Could never taint my loyalty ; if taunt
 And threat have failed to shake my constancy,
 And cruel fate now ends the strife at last,—
 If ye be aught but fables, it is time
 To show your truth ! Let me not pass to Orcus
 Abandoned, lowly, and unhonoured thus !
 Now, by my labours and untimely fate—
 By your divinity, by whatever is
 The most tremendous invocation
 Your priests or sovereign pontiff have employed,
 Your faithful martyr calls you !

[Enter, from the copse, a Tyrian youth.]

Tyr.

Princess, hail !

I greet your queenly highness *(bowing low)*.

Jer. (startled)

What art thou ?

Tyr. Thy genius, and the Spirit of thy spell.

Belovèd of the gods, what seekest thou ?

Jer. If thou hast so far knowledge, I would learn
 Whither the spirit goes when life departs.

Tyr. To its last dwelling.

Jer. This I know ; but where ?

Sid. Fair Princess, cease

To vex with such unprofitable questions

Thine honourable end. Thou shalt have all

Thy native gods can give. Thou'lt know ere night

All I can tell.

Jer. But canst thou not declare

The home of happy souls—where live the good

Who have been faithful to our native gods

And deified inhabitants of heaven ?

Tyr. When dead, one moment shall convey thee
thither ;

Meanwhile, distrust not.

Jer. Gentle Spirit, pardon,

If mortal terrors speak more loud than faith.

I pray resolve my fearful doubts, and truly

Speak. By the spells thou ownest, I conjure thee,

By the supremest Power known above,

In heaven, or earth, or sea, that thou tell truly

What thou art, and they are, and in what home

Their faithful dead abide ?

Tyr. It is a world

That rests in its own shadow, far beyond

The sun's enlivening beam—unknown on earth

To living mortal—for thy gods reserved,
And the devoted souls they most approve.
This truth may well content thy faithful heart.
Thou with thy gods may'st feel secure to dwell,
Untroubled more by this world's noise and glare.

Jer. Alas ! thou mockest. Even while speaking
yet

Thy visage alters to a scoffing change
Of laughing malice, as one in delight
To inflict and dwell on tortures. Such most
surely

Is not the destination of the pious,
Or self-devoted virtue.

Tyr. Even so.

Even there we dwell. Our foe is on the throne,
And little heeds the Gods whom you have honoured,
Or Virtues which enthrall them. Soaring pride,
And ardent love of freedom, and stern hate,
Spurning subjection, or the servile chain
Of misnamed order, or authority
Of any tyrant : thus we have been doomed
For many high and meritorious acts
To never-ending slavery, prolonged
By our own deeds.

Jer.

What then shall be the end ?

Have ye no hope ?

Tyr. Our doom is hopeless—
There still is consolation in despair,
Freedom in utmost woe.

Jer. What meanest thou ?

Tyr. We are free to curse aloud ; and this much,
We are our own fixed centre, and admit
No fear and no subjection. At the lowest
There is no further fall. We hold our own
With proud disdain, and stubborn constancy,
As thou hast done, a goddess among gods
Among the heathen canonised.
Now thou hast thine answer,
I trust it much consoles thy parting soul.

Jer. I know thee now. Thou art from gloomy
Orcus,
A spirit from the blasted crew whom Baal
Cast out from heaven of yore.

Tyr. Thy summons rose
Invoking Baal's own godhead. I descend
From Baal to his faithful worshipper.
How feel you now, fair Princess ?

Jer. Once again
If thy glib tongue can once speak without mock,
What is yon dazzling orb which now begins

To light these hills? I ask thee by the spell
Thou dost obey.

Tyr. It is the sun ; no more,
And nothing less. A very fair device
Contrived to light the earth, and be a god
For those who sagely scorn a God unseen,
And trust their sense.

Jer. And, so, it hath no life?

Tyr. No life !

Jer. Or no presiding deity?

Tyr. Thou art over curious. I fear
To abate thy pious zeal by close acquaintance
With these inanimate divinities.

Jer. Thou'st said enough, false spirit ; but I thank
Thy lying tongue for a true confirmation
Of many haunting doubts. Truth oft appears
In the exposure of the cunning wits
Used to confound it. Thy keen malice
Hath been o'er hasty for thy ill design.
I know ye, and renounce ye evermore.

Tyr. Late wisdom, truly, fair Idolatress !
Fair votaress of the Moon, believest thou
The Prince of Hell would so unclothe thine eyes
'To leave thine old ancestral faith at last,
Were not it late to turn, when life is ended,

And late conviction endeth in despair?
The presage of eternal woe, which most
Thy fathers' gods delight to improve and play with,
For those they chiefly cultivate on earth.

Jer. They are no gods, but devils, fiends accurst !

Tyr. Blaspheme not, Princess, nor offend thy lord,
The sovereign of thy life to come, the god
Of Syria's thousand altars.

Jer. Him I know not,
Nor ever have, with conscious faith, acknowledged.
I have adored bright things in heaven and earth,
God's own creations—in pure ignorance,
If it be ignorance, my heart's sole guide.
Nor could I well be wiser than the fathers,
The priests, and sages of my native land.
God of the Hebrews ! if this fiend speaks truly,
Why hast Thou made all nature so divine
That it is hard to sense not to adore
The beautiful and glorious ? It is certain
Thou dost not dwell in darkness, if yon light
Be of Thy giving. Take, oh, take my spirit !
If Thou hast made it, for it is thine own,
And only turns to Thee.

Tyr. In vain, weak mortal.
Will He accept a soul all black with sin ?

Thy life's election may not be recalled
 By senseless protestation. Can a moment,
 The last poor fluttering throb of sinful life,
 Repair long years of dark idolatry,
 Or cancel Satan's seal? On thy lost soul
 All words are henceforth idle. Come away :
 Thou art already of the dead.

[*A step is heard, and the TYRIAN
 retires among the thicket.*

Jer.

He's gone !

And with him gone this foul oppression
 That made even death more painful.

* * * Some one cometh

With a more life-like seeming.

Enter ISDRAFIL.

* * * O my brother !

Isd. How is it with thee, sister ?

Jer.

I know not.

I have not in me many moments' life,
 And these have not been solely left to pain.
 Haunted by some smooth sprite—which hath in
 malice
 Revealed more truth than my past life hath learned,
 But with no friendly aim—with cruel craft
 Striving to urge despair.

Isd. Thou hast been dreaming,
Under the sense of outward pain.

Jer. My brother,
I have not now the strength to tell thee all
I have heard and suffered, or the brighter change
I feel within my spirit, making death
More calmly peaceful than life ever was.

Isd. Thou'rt faint, dear sister, only. Let us leave
This savage spot. One quiet hour of rest
Will renovate thy strength.

Jer. One little hour !

How much lies in the compass of that hour
Beyond the Seer's conjecture, or the reach
Of reason's most adventuring flight to grasp !
Shaping the future vainly from the pains
Or strivings of the present—as a mirror
Reflects its spectral shadows on the eye,
As objects seen afar. Ah, me ! I faint !
O mercy, God of Israel ! * * *

Isd. * * * Thy sense wanders.
Come, let me bear thee from this horrid wild.
I'll bear thee gently, sister.

Jér. Kneel beside me,
And drive away the dark One while I die!

Isd. Thou shalt not die, my sister! Many years

Are yet before thee—years of peace and honour—
Blest in thy new-found light and happiest rescue
From Satan and his soul-destroying crew.

Jer. My life hath been a sinful dream. I wake
To know myself, as in the new-born day
Truth breaks upon the sleeper. O how much
My heart needs cleansing ! to wash out the stain
Of that false life—that waste of God-given time,
In treasuring wrath. O Thou to whom alone
The gifts of life belong ! to Thee I fly.
Thou only canst release the soul from death,
And conquer the Destroyer. * * *

* * * Sweetest peace

Grows gently on my breast, and blest assurance
Comes as an answer to devoted thought
From some unseen respondent, which, beyond
All power of mortal utterance, shapes the thought
To its own hallowed meanings, overcoming
All fear of death within. I thank thee, God !
I see heaven open, far above,—and now
A gracious angel beckons. Farewell, brother !
Be warned by me !

Isd.

Jerada ! She is gone !

THE
COURT OF DARKNESS.

A POEM.*

SCENE—*The Mountains of Ephraim.*

TIME—*Evening. The assembly of the Fallen Angels appears grouped over the broken and precipitous summits.*

SCENE I.—NISROCK, AZA, THAMMUZ, TYRIEL.

Nis. Ill met, Etherial Powers :—whom Sammael
Compels thus rudely from the land and deep—
From Nile to Eastern Pharphar, or the steep
Of rocky Carmel : with disturbing spell,
—Wherever our devoted legions dwell—
Dispersing like the golden dreams of sleep
Those charmed pomps and pageantries which quell
To brief repose our clinging agony.

* Published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1828.

Tham. Alas ! with these fallacious glories flee
The gay attire of spell-raised loveliness,
And all the wanton forms of phantasy,
Which we, to win the love of mortals, wear,
And hide us from ourselves. The charms which dress
Earth's fond and passionate idolatry
With specious light, as evening doth suffuse
Yon westward vapours with her Iris hues.

Nis. Yon sunset colours on the western air
Are not so fleet to perish, or so fair :
For swifter than the cloud-born lightning
Blights from the stately elm its garb of spring,
We feel and wither in the fatal blast
Of his dread summons. Ere the spell be past
Each godlike apparition is unblent
Dissolved into its pilfered element ;
And we are what sin made us—first and last—
Wan—thunder-stricken—images of doom !

Aza. Our own black thoughts return :—as from
the tomb,
The eternal doomed, to judgment call'd, arise,
O'erladen with soul-sinking memories—
Thoughts which can die not ; could they but destroy
The wretched things who feel them—happy they !

Tyr. Now truce with thy vain soothsaying ;—or say

Why are we thus disturbed? Stern Sammael
Dallies with us like victims,—his rough sway
Now briefly intermitting—now more fell,
Breaking our gloomy rest, our short oblivion
Of him, and of ourselves, and our dark fate.

Aza. He hates. And 'tis the wont of brooding
hate

To close in well-dissembled slumber's guise
Its venom-spotted coils and serpent eyes,
And thus disguised in ambush grim await
The moment when its victims deem all still.

Nis. The rest he suffers, but repairs for ill
The sentient spirit; and new-strings the breast,
Lest craving malice lack its vulture food:—

Aza. But when it hath the broken nerve renewed,
And, all forgetful of the foe, we rest—
He comes with retribution from afar,
As darkness follows the Hesperian star.

Tham. But who may tell what woes peculiar brood
In our grim star to-night.

Nis. We must abide
The pestilence of his collected ire.
Spent in the strife of solitary pride—
Ambition, whose long toil hath nothing won—
He waits till the diurnal course hath run,

To vent his surcharged bosom's angry fire
On us who must endure it.

Tham. He doth sway
With the sick pride of a fall'n potentate
Who seeks to hide his ineffectual state,
And in dim darkness wears his faded ray
Of crazed and visionary pomp.

Nis. When day
Hath disappeared beneath yon dusty portals,
Which stand in clouded gold on the bright west ;
When dewy sleep falls o'er earth's weary mortals,
These heights shall by his giant foot be prest,
Emerging from night's darkness.

Tyr. Day grows dim
Within yon cloudy curtain of pale gold
Which mantleth its fair shrine with shadowy fold,
And earth's deep vales put off their gaudy trim.

Nis. The many tints of eve melt into one
Embrowning shade, from Gilead to the plain,
As, like a fiery giant, the broad sun
Hurrieth apace to meet the western main.

Tham. Oh ! that a wish might stay its fatal
course !

Nis. Its course *is* fatal—it is past the force
Of angel power to stay it—and must on,

Uncheek'd by mortal, or immortals' care,
Till it hath measured its appointed share
Of seasons, and its tale of days is done.

Aza. It is the circling wheel of destiny,
And with its revolutions all things fleet
By many courses to one end, to meet
Assembled on Time's awful boundary—
And part for ever into light and darkness.
Powers and Dominions shall meet there, to hear
The repetition of our fatal story
Read from the Accuser's book, before the throne!
And all heaven's eyes burn fierce on us alone:—
And in our fall all vital Beings glory,
From the winged hierarch to the child of clay—
Even man!—death's victim—slave to every ill
That flesh inherits in its mortal day,
Clothed in the light of some fair star, which still
The powers of earth and air in fear await—
For which wise mortals watch heaven's eastward
gate—

Even man shall rise as from the tomb new born
To look on our sad plight with hate and scorn.

Nis. That sorrow shall be spared thee, awe shall
drown

All triumphs and all glories—lost in one,

As the starr'd sphere grows faint before the sun ;
And all those varying spirits he chain'd down
In one deep, over-mastering suspense—
One breathless pause of fear and mystery.

Tham. Not the bright angels !

Nis. Angel sympathy
Shall turn their eyes to those weak souls, which
tremble
Between our fate and theirs.

Aza. Upon *them*, we
Shall darkly gaze where they in light assemble
And—stained with guilt which cannot be forgiven—
Behold the blessed angels, erst our peers,
Where our fates cross and part 'twixt hell and heaven :
For one bright bitter moment—never more !
But, in that momentary meeting, store
More grief, than an eternity of tears
Can ever weep away.

Tyr. These murmuring fears
To our unnatural forms new horror add ;
We want not such vain complaints to make us sad.

Aza. We are too light and vain for our sad fate.

Tyr. We, too, could weep—might tears but wash
away

The written record—the predestined date

Of that unknown, unutterable day,
Which even the sinless fearfully await :
But nought is left the destined, save to linger,
Forgetful of the doom they may not shun,
Among those fair scenes, where creation's finger
Hath writ no record of the deeds we've done.

Aza. Fallen angel, no ! Sad memory haunts us
still,

Far as the spirit's boundless sense of ill.
Our darkness dwells within—we may not fly
The inborn tortures of the conscious mind.
Seek we the light : Reproachful light on high
Bids conscience seek the refuge of the blind !
No !—not the scorpion pang—the fiery throe,
Which starts the quick nerve from the burning vein—
The rack of insane terror—guilty woe—
The demon of the human heart and brain—
Wring our pale victim, as we writhe at this
Reproachful symbol of abandoned bliss !

Tyr. Peace, Aza ! silence thine ill-boding scream ;
Thou searest away the sun before his time.

Aza. Ay, thou weak angel—now his latest gleam
Is on the faded heaven.

Tham.

To the left

Dost thou not see yon thickening vapour rise

Like a dark yew-tree to the sable skies,
From the bare granite's thunder-smitten cleft?

Tyr. Who rises from beneath it?

All.

Sammael !

SCENE II.

SAMMAEL, ANGELS, CHORUS.

Sam. Spirits, whose birth-place is the highest
heaven,

Whose home is in Gehenna's awful star,
Usurpers of earth's altars—earthly gods !
Or how shall I address you ? Revellers ?
Minions of gaudy light, who love the sun,
And dare to bask ye in his beams of glory ?
Or fiends of darkness ?—for like such ye look—
Ye have of late forgotten whose ye are,
Your proper functions and dark destiny ;
Ye have become ambitious and refined ;
Genii of virtues and moralities—
Spirits of pomps and places ; deities
Of actions, passions, elements ;—array'd
In all that charms the eye and soothes the sense :
Ye ransack nature for ambrosial tastes,

And decompose the sunbeams for attire.
Courting repose and vain forgetfulness
Ye slumber on soft breezes and fresh flowers ;
And dwell apart, or meeting as earth's gods,
Make honour mean with mutual reverence.
Rarely with man—or if ye walk the world,
'Tis to seek fanes and votarists, not victims.
Was it for this, spirits accurst ! for this
I lost celestial empire ? To establish
On earth a sensual sty for craven fiends !—
Was it for this ? that ye may dwell secure
In light, I may not look unwithered on.
Earth lacks not revellers ; that such as you
Should lift their owl-eyes to the glorious day,
And mock its noon of beauty with most foul
And phantom aspects !

Cho. Taunt not thy slaves, lord of the burning
throne

With honours thou hast given—
With blighted beauty—hope o'erthrown ;—
We, too, have dwelt in heaven !
What are earth's glories to repay
Immortal glory pass'd away !
Remember all we lost, and deem
Earth's respite brief from woe—

A light which trembles o'er the stream
Ere yet it dash below—
Where hell's eternity doth spread
Its shoreless billows dark and dread.
Nor grieve thou, if to every wind
Our thrones and altars rise—
Where'er our standards gleam, behind,
Thine own black banner flies :—
Our deeds of seeming light, when done,
'Tis thine own triumph flouts the sun !
On templed height above the wave
Where spells of power are uttered ;
In mystic shrine within the cave
Where saying dark is muttered—
Though gods within be deemed to dwell,
Oh, are they not the gates of hell ?
All things that precious be, and all things fair,
From the lone desert to the roofs of man—
All the bright fields of air,
All the green wave doth span,
Are of our winning, and obey thy powers,
Thine empire—to enjoy them, ours.

Sam. To mortals leave these vain and idle toys
To fool themselves with, till they are like us,
Immortal grown in sin and suffering—

'Tis not the fuming altar, festal chaunt,
The solemn pomp, the wreathed sacrifice,
Can make ye that ye are not—heroes—gods.
Can flattery vanquish fate, and lies repeal
The eternal edict, which, once heard, even yet
Rings o'er the gulf of many a thousand years
Redemption to our victims, woe to us?—
In vain ye blind the superstitious Gentiles ;
Unless our empire be established here
O'er Salem's mount and fatal Galilee,
Earth's empire is as dust before the wind !—
But this high end demands far other means
Than the poor play of mock divinity.
Watch with enduring toil, the Foe sleeps not,
But from heaven's height laughs with immortal scorn,
To see his foes thus purblind at the brink
Of the unfathomed pit ! Behold ye not
The footsteps dread of your arch-enemy
Stamp'd on the ground ye tread? Do not your
pleasures
Proclaim the hand that forgeth pains for you ?
When ye behold at morn yon granite hills
Bask in their Lord's serene and silent sunshine ;
When ye inhale the sweet fresh atmosphere,
Which mantles with life's breath the rolling world

Oh ! can ye dare be joyful ? Dare ye raise
Your phantom eyes to yon sidereal host,
Which throngs Infinitude with fearful brightness,
And hope your darkness may defy his light,
Or fiends exult at noonday ? Know ye not
His eye-beam and his spirit compass you,
His thunders dwell around you ? yet ye sleep !

Cho. We slumber not, dread chief : what mortal man
Escapes our fierce assay ?
What moment, since the human world began,
Have we surceased for victims still to play
In the contemptible game of mortal life,
 With repetition weary !
Mingling with man's illusions, love or strife,
 Or project airy.
Do we not glitter in the far-sought gem,
 Gay garment, gold ?
 Flit we not round the uneasy diadem,
Whispering proud thoughts to things of earth's vile
 mould,
Prompting the base to stratagem,
 To strife the bold ?
Do we not tempt the needy slave to stealth,
And win, by secret lure, or coffer'd wealth,
 The sensual or the cold ?

Do we not win the wise man's willing ear

With specious pleas,

Tempting from virtue's stern career

To fatal ease?

The hunter with barbed sheaf and bended bow,

Breathes not with keener glow

The mountain's morning air—than we to chase,

With fine-wove wiles and fair entanglements

Our human quarry. His, less delight

When the dun stag comes tottering to the ground—

Or savage bird pierced on its airy round,

Flaps down with useless wing through the thin air;

Than ours, when round the victim to thy power,

We flit, in life's last hour,

To whisper horror, and our own despair.

Sam. Now speak ye like yourselves! But this I knew,

That ye are evil; I did but complain,

That so much wickedness is frustrated

By your strange vanity. Ye love to dream

That ye are still in heaven, to play the angel

That men may deem you good.

Cho.

Infernal father,

Who call us good, are in no doubtful way

To find their error on some luckless day.

Sam. Were ye but honest in your ill intents

'Twere well enough. I never did suspect ye
Of any goodness truly. But enough—
We waste our darkness here upon ourselves,
Yon southern cross that slowly weareth round
The restless axle of the polar heaven,
Turns westward toward Arabia, and the dawn
May pry upon our synod grim, before
Our work's half done. Know, ye are called
To grace this visitation with the account
Of what ye do in this contested world,
Our battle-field with heaven : since 'tis but meet
From time to time to muster our array
Of Powers and Virtues—ere we be surprised
By that mysterious foe which must be met
On some all-dreadful morn. So, now in order
Let each declare his doings. Or do thou,
Grotesque and pyebald Spirit, who dost wear
A fitting livery for courtly shows,
Declare their titles and pretensions,
Lest we may cheat some devil of the rank
He doth pretend to wear.

Momus.

Sire in this

We fear not to account : Here's Nemesis,
Ask what she doth, you'll hear some precious tale,
Will make your eyes run o'er with fiery gladness.

See this gay spectre, with the harpy nail
And venom'd eye, the fount of bitterest bale,
She is the fiend that smiles the world to madness ;
She is call'd Venus : and yon speckled imp
That by her side doth limp
With malice-glittering glance,
He is the god of love ; he leads the dance
Of folly ending in the abyss of sin ;
His are the revels and the laughing hours
The gay enchantments and the wanton bowers,
The tender ditties and smooth roundelays
That wake fierce fires,
And wile fond mortals in the willing maze
Of soft desires.

Sam. An imp most laudable ;
'Tis well he doth not show his pleasant face,
Or it would scare them sober.

Mo. So it falls
Oft, when his votarists are most deluded
He cannot hold his malice, but peeps out,
And then they laugh no more.

Sam. Vain little fool ; 'tis better laugh than mourn,
It is not weeping that weighs down the soul ;
Thou should'st steal off, dissolving as a vapour
Which first grows doubtful on the eye, and then

Is gone, before its absence can be noted ;
Leaving the guilt without the gain. But thou,

(Turning to Momus)—

Thou garrulous mooncalf, with thy leering lips,
Say, who the fiend art thou? Thy name on earth?

Mo. Men call me Momus, in the realms of Greece,
Where our head-quarters are ; I serve yon urchin ;
With ambushed folly the unguarded breast
I bare for his fine shaft : and smooth the way,
Marking each fell enticement with a jest.

I have a store

Of gay pretences and of trifling toys

To ornament the way to hell :

You'll seldom find me wanting for a jest—

Or if it comes not, I can laugh so loud

And wreath my visage with such grinning grace,

'Twould mock Hell's gloom away.

Sam. No doubt, no doubt ; thy wryfaced pleasantry
Will much enliven by a little warming—

Thy loud mirth will grow louder—thou wilt yell

More gaily than the rest ; though much I doubt

If they will laugh who hear thee ; nay, poor imp,

I would not dash thy gay hyena smile—

I do but sport.

(Turning to another.)

Come, here is food for mirth !

Thou leaden-looking demon, who art thou ?

What means thy sable glance and solemn scowl ?

Can'st thou not tell thine office, like the rest ?

Momus, what means he ?

Mo. Sovereign king ! he seeks

A definition to begin withal—

It is his way with men—his thoughts demand

Large words, not always to be found at will

To clothe them duly.

Sam. Hath he no meaning, Momus ?

Mo. Not much truly—

But oft he setteth human craniums reeling

With fine distinctions, in disjointed words

That seem to hide some sense, and yet have none—

A kind of mirthless wit, or sage enigma

That hath no answer to it.

Sam. Then if so

He can at least say something for himself.

Mo. If he begins, he'll never stop till doomsday.

Sam. Solemn demon, say, what is thy name ?

Fiend. I am Philosophy.

Sam. I never saw imposture better masked,

Or with a fairer name : if thy deep wisdom

Can stoop to such a shallow thing as meaning,

And speak the vulgar tongue, like other devils,
I wish to know the mystery of thy art,
And how it works man's bale.

Fiend.

I cheat the breast

With its own virtue and own wisdom, changing
All truth into some lying likeness, drest
So that the idle world knows not itself.—
As you gay fool deludes with silly jokes,
I find grave reasons to the same good end ;
As he envenoms earth's light vanity,
With idiot laughter hallooing fools to death,
So I with deeper art, and wider power,
Uphold the pillars of life's mighty dream.
I give to fame, to swelling state and wealth
Their solid seeming, and false permanence :
The prop of grave conventions. I can change
Each vice into some virtue ; I can draw
Good acts from sinful motives, and persuade
The fool so duped how very good he is :
I can entice deep wits to lay aside
The oracles of heaven and seek out God
In subtleties of language.

Sam.

I confess

Thou art a goodly fiend ; I bid thee prosper.
We shall much need thee in the world below,

With sceptic sense to fine away hell's pangs,
And charm our tortures with the spell of words
That prove them all a dream incredible—
Well, nay—I do offend thy dignity—
Pray be not angry—I, too, honour wisdom—
Thou wilt some day be our prime minister—
Only be not too subtle : human hearts
Need not much logic to pervert God's laws :
Spur not the willing steed. There is no devil
More specious than the wilfulness of passion.
The breast, far gone from light, spins round itself
A curious web of gay illusions,
To glide to ruin with a peaceful sense.

(Turns to another.)

Now who art thou, thin fiend, whose wavering eye
Wastes its weak glances on the empty air ?
Thou lookest as one who hath forgot half way
Where thou wert going : hath our craft an office
That needs so frail a fiend ?

Fiend.

I teach weak mortals

To waver and look back—when by some chance
They quit the downward way, I then start forth,
And cry aloud—"Look back—that path is rough—
'Twill task you sorely—and the end is doubtful—
Thou yielddest the present for a future good."

Or bid the striving pilgrims "rest a little,
For that the present day has done its task—
To-morrow ever will be time enough."
And so to-morrow and the next day comes,
As they spin forth from time's incessant wheel,
Still to a sinful present sily changing—
The morrow that I speak of never comes;
Till the dark night that hath no dawn, surprises.

Sam. Philosophy may go to school to thee—
She hath no such fine vein of fallacy,
In all her boasted schools. No other fiend
Doth even the thousandth part of thy brave deeds—
Thy very seeming weakness is more strong
Than fifty scoffing or o'ermastering fiends—
I do approve thee well.

(Turns to another.)

And what art thou,
Fiend of the keen and space-devouring eye,
With lean cadaverous frame and grasping clutch?
Speak, hideous demon.

Fiend. Dreadful king,
I am that great one which the world adores,
For they who serve thy slave are more in number
Than all the dupes of every other god
Thrice summed together. I fill the breast

With that keen love of gain, which they who know,
Hold light all other loves. My votarists,
With toil or peril, study, fast, and watch,
Subdue the soul, and macerate the flesh—
Spurn all affections, and repel all ties—
Are more than saintly in their toils and tears,
To win a little, which, if won at last,
—For I make thrifty bargains—they shall have
Approached the gate of Orcus, and in vain
Expect the golden rest I once did promise
When life was fresh ; while near in sight ariseth
The ebon turrets of Gehenna's portal,
Ringed by their harpy heirs with raven claw
To strip them as they pass.

Sam.

Thou shalt be there,

Surrounded well by clamorous legions,
Arch-usurer of hell. I well approve thee—
Thou dost not lose thy dupes half way
As some of these—thy promises deceive
To the last moment. When the heart forsakes
Thy golden visions, sense itself hath ebbed—
Who will may enter—thou hast won the day.

(Turns to another.)

And thou, imperial and high-fronted thing,
Thou need'st some merit for thy boastful mien.

Fiend. I rule in councils, and pervert the mind
Of kings and their advisers : I inspire
The statesman's sense, the wisdom of the world,
With all its solemn contradictions—
The form revering, and the power denying—
Defrauding conscience with a hollow show.
I tell the statesman that he is no priest,
The cabinet no temple ; and—thus cheated—
The liminary law that doth assign
To every ordinance of heaven or earth
Their meet subordination is soon lost,
And man forgets our kingly foe, who rules
Alike in court or temple.

Sam. And say who
Is he who seems to wait upon thy nod,
With sanguinary arm prepared to strike?

Fiend. He is the god of war—and prompt as lightning
To vindicate the slightest claim I urge,
Though 'twere a barren cliff in the mid sea,
The herbless home of gull and cormorant,
With the best blood of populous realms.

Sam. He needs
No tongue at least to praise him.

Fiend.

Every clime

Is glorious with his laurelled monuments—
Each human record crimson with his deeds—
Each field is fattened with his offerings—
Upon his altars tears are mixed with blood.
Yet gorgeous is the pomp, with gold, and plume,
And glory vocal in her thousand lays,
That lures the martial votary to his shrine—
He is a mighty god.

Sam. No doubt—no doubt—
Yet mightier than useful. I would rather
One soul perverted than an empire slain—
We war for souls, not bodies.

Fiend. • Sovereign sire,
Some score of lesser demons follow him,
Too slight for separate notice here, who ply
Their little trade in secret, winning souls
By sure but petty wiles.

Sam. How name ye them ?

Fiend. Men call them vices ; and their followers
Deny them and despise, yet worship them
With shame-faced reverence.

Sam. They are pretty imps.

Fiend. They do good service both in court and camp,
And every other place—without their help
The busiest fiend would mostly tempt in vain.

They sit within the bosom's citadel,
With double face, a friendly aspect wearing,
To ope the portal for each foe that knocks,
Still watching without respite.

(Turning to another.)

Sam. Well, soft fiend,
With decent aspect, and with face demure,
Thou lookest a straggler from the hostile camp,
Halting 'twixt heaven and hell.

Fiend. Great king, even such
Are they whom I delude with reverent seemings.
I sit in temples and in holy places,
Prompting unhallowed thoughts, that bring with
them

The hankerings and follies left without,
To mingle with men's prayers—impatient
Of sin's brief intermissions—
I breathe on holy thoughts and good desires,
And turn them to some godless vanity.

Sam. Go on and prosper in thy pious care—
Thy charge is precious. Some of these brave spirits
Work hard to win souls lost without their aid
With a vast waste of good malignity—
Bedaubing sin with guilt superfluous—
Heaping the coals of hell, which they will find

Full heated to their cost.

(Turning to another.)

And thou, pale fiend,
With blank astounded aspect, as if thou
Wert some damned mortal?

Fiend. Mine alas, the lot,
To strive with men who walk the godly path—
To lurk for them in dark by-ways to sin—
To stagger faith, or prompt false confidence,
And often urge depression, oft despair,
And oft in seeming to prevail—alas!
Still foiled by some invisible opponent,
That with resistless influence withstands
And frustrates all I do.

Sam. (grows furious.) Ay—so it is—
Said I not so—ye crew accursed for ever!
What boots it that ye are permitted here,
While your own fires await you, vainly wasting
Their fond embrace on hell's vacuity?
What do ye here, deforming this fair world
With evil natures, spiteful to no end
But to defeat your malice and recoil
From the scared victim, on the feeble tempter?
For thus repentance from your vain seduction
Mounts trembling to the mercy-seat above,

And Grace comes earthward hovering to impart
Comfort and healing to the penitent.

Cho. Stern king of terror, pain hath spent
Our fiery force of will—
Some power to good o'errules the intent,
Or some recoiling ill—

Hell, weaving snares a thousand ways,
Finds mercy central in the maze !

In vain we purpose, act, advise,
And shift the treacherous view—
There is a beam from unseen eyes
O'erwatching all we do !

So, do we that we would not,—fly
To the event we shun,

And while in fiercest ill we vie,
Lo, good is done !

So do our acts defeat our will—
So circumscribed our power of ill.

Sam. Ay—ye are weak, because ye court oblivion,
And stultify hell's hate with human follies ;
Your very victims tempt ye, and ye are
Touched with the weak taints of humanity.
Ye do forget your natures. Yet for this
Ye shall not gain one moment from perdition—
Weak ye may be—ye must be evil still :

Soft without mercy, without love promoting
The ends of grace from your malignity,
As genial warmth glows far, while the live furnace
Burns inward fiercely still——

(*Pausing*)—For shame, ye damned !
Forget not your immitigable doom,
And let remembrance give relentless force :
Draw the fell purpose from the blighted hope :
Be stern and unsubdued as ye are hapless—
As ye are fated, fatal.——If ye wear
The frame of beauty and the smile of love,
Remember what they cover still and are—
The sunbeam on Gomorrah's charnel pool—
The hue that gilds the deadly poison fruit—
The mask of malice unsubdued, of woe
Eternal, unreprieved. And what avails
This low sub-solar world, with its vain charms
To ease your dismal gloom ? Shall not all pass ?
Sun, stars, and sparkling waters, and gay shores,
Towered towns and mountain altars, gods and men,
Pomps, pleasures, powers—all that glads the heart,
Or wins the curious eye, or craving taste—
Shall they not perish, in one moment strewn
Into that void and black infinity
In which your own grim prison-star alone

Shall roll its endless way with its sad crew
From deep to darker deep, where it shall be
My task to teach—

Cho. O spare us, spare us, dreadful king!
Thy brow with death is crowned—
Thine eyes gleam hellish lightning
On the pale cliffs around—
Thy voice seems as the trump of doom,
To seal the abyss and cleave the tomb!

Sam.—(*musings.*) How livid consternation's many
hues

Cloud their scarred brows with fear's deformity!
'Tis a fair sight, and soothes my wounded pride.
I love to gaze upon them thus—and muse
In calmness upon things that angels fear.
Ye worthless fiends, when I behold you thus (*aloud*)
Crouch terror-stricken at the name of that
Ye must substantially endure, I feel
Strange pity touch my bosom's adamant
To think how lost ye are. I could nigh weep
Over your hopeless fall; as the lone granite
Pours down the night dew o'er the desert sands,
As if it wept for their sterility
With softness not its own. Know, hapless fiends,
There comes an hour already written down

Within that book whose words are things appointed,
When the page turns, that ne'er folds back again,
Moving in dreadful stillness to the end—
When ye shall court the things ye shudder at,
And plunge into hell's self for very terror.
—Ay, ye may tremble, but the day will come
When death's wide gate shall open widest, last,
For other souls than human. Ye shall court
That hideous refuge from the judgment-seat,
Where Mercy's self, arrayed in light too pure
For sin to look at, bids all hope depart!
—But 'tis enough—ye may retire. These thoughts
May fitlier soothe his loneliness, to whom
Terror is a slave. Be diligent
Each in his proper station, and obedient
To watch and win—be prompt at every call—
Wear pleasure as a mask and not a chain.
Be men your victims, not your flatterers.
In all things view the end, that, perishing,
Vengeance may smile upon your fate, and mingle
Triumph with your despair—peopling your prison
With human generations. Hence, away!

(The assembly disappears.)

Sam. (alone.) They're gone to ply their ineffectual
toil,

To sow in guilt what they must reap in woe ;
Heaping upon themselves more deep damnation.
Thus would I have it. Little once I thought,
When leagued with me in crime and penalty
They fell, condemned to an eternity
Of exile from all joy and holiness,
And the first stains of sinfulness and sorrow
Fell like a blight upon their angel brows—
Myself the cause ; it never crossed my thoughts
That they could fall so low, or, stead of pity,
That I could hate them thus. Glory, and power,
And holy love, and pure intelligence,
And the serenity of changeless bliss,
Dwelt o'er them as an elemental essence
That could not cease to be. I could not deem
That aught could so extinguish the pure fire
Of their all sun-like beauty. Yet 'tis changed !
So vast a change, and for such little cause—
A little curious prying into things
Half told in heaven—the faith of angels there—
By me not credible or to be borne—
Involving contradiction and disgrace.
And so with cavils and irreverent sneers
I won them to my wish, and they are grown
Too hateful to be looked on ; and I loathe them

With all that bitter agony of hate
Which is the fiend's last torture ; thus I've seen
Some frail fair dupe of amorous perfidy,
The victim of a smile, by man betrayed,
Won to debasement, and then left in loathing—
Alas ! I cannot leave my fatal conquest.
Oh, if despair could uncreate the past—
The past !—undying in its very death—
The gulf of nothingness that swallows all—
Impervious save to black regret. 'Twere well
Could I return to nought, and so dissolve
This everlasting consciousness of woe,
In hate and pride imprisoned endlessly ;
Or that I were the humblest mortal wretch
That crawls beneath yon shadowing temple's height
Under the sky of Canaan ; so I might
Lay down this weight of sceptred misery,
And fly for ever from myself and these !
But pride reproves such thoughts : and they are vain !
The unatoneable deeds of ages, rise
Like clouds between me and the throne of grace.
I may not hope—nor fear ; still unsubdued
As when I ruled the anarchy of heaven,
Like that famed Roman exile musing o'er
The dust of fallen Carthage, yet stand I

Musing the vengeful hour ; self-centred still,
I live in fate's despite, firm and impassive
To all that chance, and time, and ruin brings.
In that disastrous day, when this huge world
Shall, as a tempest-beaten edifice,
Rock into giant fractures, and the sound
Of the Archangel's trumpet o'er the deep
Bid fall the bonds of nature, to let forth
Destruction's formless fiend, from world to world
Trampling the stars to darkness—I shall gaze,
Myself no humble wreck, calm and unmoved
Upon the ruin of the works of God :
And my last look shall be a look of triumph
O'er the fallen pillars of the firmament—
The wreck of being, by my deeds achieved—
Deeds which o'erpay the power of destiny !

WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

1835.

I.

WITH solemn fall and sweet the noonday chime,
Through choir and cloister grey, repeats the hour
To the long Dead—another hour of time !
'Tis but in scenes like this that voice hath power
To wake the heart, as it flows thrilling past,
Through aisles and dim-arched cloisters, wave on wave,
With long vibration lessening to the last ;
Like busy man's vain fancies, which thus fast,
With transient sweetness, into silence rave,
Chasing each other down into the grave,
Whither these echoes murmur as they go,
The still sad music of that ceaseless tide
On which the waves of human folly glide
Thro' life's bright sun-glimpse, to the shades below.

II.

It falleth on the spirit like a dream,
That such a lone sequestered vacancy
Should thus be met, even in the central stream,
Where life is loudest. And it seems to be
As one had wandered from the worldly track,
Where the grim spoiler wends his unseen way
'Mid gone-by scenes—the world of ages back—
Moving concealed amid memorials grey,
To startle not the world of outer day
With scroll denouncing all beneath the sun;
Or, lest his trite old emblems cast a gloom
Upon the round so oft and briefly run—
The font, the bridal altar, and the tomb,
The morn, noon, night of man, even to the blast of
doom.

III.

Yet here full oft Pride's clarion call hath thrilled
Along these solemn cloisters full and free :
And breathing crowds, with expectation stilled,
Have watched the rising morn of majesty,
Starring yon shadowy gloom with a rich night
Of jewelled splendour, and—more fair to see—

Propitious beams from stars of living light,
Have rained moist lustre as a glittering shower,
Upon some form and front of high command,
From the robed prelate's dedicating hand,
Rising new-zoned with England's sign of power,
The Edward or the Henry of the hour,
Glorious as new-born daybreak, and elate,
A thing too haughty for the touch of fate!

IV.

Oh scene, alas! of strange extremes: the strain
Of triumph hath usurped the mourner's breath!—
Yon courtly crowd hath trod with stately train
The path yet beaten by the pomp of Death.
To-day, the coronation;—yesterday,
That sterner pageant, which the self-same way
Conducted last month's monarch to the tomb:
His equipage of state—the hearse and plume;
His throne, the coffin; kingly robe, the shroud!
Stript of his smile of influence, and discrowned
By the stern victor Death; his realm, the bound
Of that dark vault, where the forgotten proud—
Plantagenet or Tudor—darkly wait,
In synod grim below, holding divided state.

v.

And thus goes by the glory of the age,
Leaving small note—for men scarce pass away
Ere wanes life's aspect, and Time turns the page
Of things accomplished. Soon the new-born day,
Robed in new thoughts, casts o'er the grave's decay
A mantle of oblivion. All but here—
Here only, through his pillared gloom, the sight
Behold, the shades of ancient kings appear—
Here antique echoes murmur to the ear
Of fancy in her legendary mood—
Here Saxon, Gaul, rough franklin, courteous knight,
Pass in their age's form, refined or rude,
In gliding show successively renewed.

vi.

These time-trod pavements have thrown back the rays
Of Cressy's sun. The morn of Azincour
Hath poured through yon dim oriel on the gaze
Of cowed and hooded forms, whose day is o'er.
O, glorious were those deeds, those men of yore,
The hearts of proof, the arms of chivalry,
Which fire the breast to muse on, though they be

Sunk to the babble of a useless lore,
Old rust, and fretted scroll, and storied shield ;
Vain playthings, on which idle eyes may pore ;
And in their semblance, small memorial read
Of those they clad ; in castle, council, field,
In England's hour of glory or of need,
Old Battel Abbey's knights—the lords of Runne-
mede !

VII.

High spirits have been here in glorious Eld,
To every breast that beats to honour dear ;
Not by the visioned eye, as now, beheld,
But in the noontide of their famed career.
Gower, Sidney, Spenser, have been looked on here
In honoured life—Surrey, whose name to say
Delights the lover's and the poet's ear,
And Chaucer old, the father of the lay ;
Here Avon's bard hath stood in England's day,
Whose glories no fair age shall see restored,
Till the muse dies, and time itself decay.
Haply some glorious noontide here hath poured
Its tinted glory round blind Milton's head.
What mighty names, alas ! are numbered with the
dead !

VIII.

Old England ! proud and spirit-stirring name !
Linked with all noble thoughts and feelings high,
Thy lion-spirit still hath turned the same
Firm front to popular rage or tyranny ;
While every land beneath the heaven's broad eye
Hath been oppressed by many or by one,
Her temple, Freedom still hath found in thee,
If, as some deem, thy high career hath run,
And, like Troy's tale, thy glorious day hath been,*
Here let the sons of thy degenerate age
Revere the memory of the Ocean Queen,
Nor doubt the records of thy history's page,
Though sunk the warrior's arm—though mute the
counsel sage.

IX.

If thy stern genius on her sea-beat crag
Shall howl like Tarshish, to the western main
The mournful burthen of her ocean flag,
Sunk on those waters once her glorious reign ;
While winds that swelled her sail, shall pour in vain
Their desolation on the Atlantic wave ;

* Fuit Illion et ingens gloria Dardanidum.

Still, in these venerable walls they sleep—
Old England's sons, the unforgotten brave,
Who bore her conquering name on land and deep,
Where'er broad ocean's furthest billows lave.
Here Nelson rests in honour ; here shall come
Great Wellington, when Flattery's voice is dumb
And factious Slander hath forgot to rave,
To glorify the land their valour might not save.

X.

But lo ! from shaft to shaft along the file
Of shadowy columns, through the twilight grey,
A glancing sunbeam breaks with sudden smile,
And tomb and bust are touched with life-like ray.
O, doth the bright intrusion come to say
That morn shall dawn upon the lingering sleep
Of mouldering vault beneath, and silent cell,
When the last trump shall sound upon the deep,
And this old pile be gathered to the heap
Of common dust? O, comes it not to tell,
With dusky brightness, through the sacred gloom
Of that fair beam of life, whose radiance fell
Through the pale realms of Death, and, spite of doom,
Reversed the fearful sentence of the tomb !

THE END OF TIME.

A DREAM.

THE crowded Carnival was high,
And laughter filled the midnight sky,
And riot shook the ground:
When o'er the tumult fell a cry
That stilled all other sound.
From the paled stars, o'er song and shout
The mirthful din of that gay rout
It came—and all stood deadly still,
Bereft of motion, thought, and will,
As if some terror undefined
Had power to paralyze the mind,
And glaze the eye, and freeze the blood,
And fix each reveller where he stood,
Stopped short in mirth's fantastic tread,
Like some pale marble o'er the dead.
It was a voice right full of dread:
Though far above the sable gloom,—

It smote upon the inmost soul,
As the last angel's fatal scroll
—The summons of the day of doom—
The dreadful writ that breaks the tomb!
Each eyeball stood with purpose quelled,
Its breath each beating bosom held;
While from the dark Sublime
That utterance dreadly syllabled—
“It is the end of Time!”

Ten thousand smiles were at the birth
Of frolic, folly, love :
Ten thousand purposes of mirth
The chain of pleasure wove.
No earthquake shook ; no thunder rolled,
To palsy hearts so gay and bold,
In pleasure's reckless mood ;
The love-strain had not ceased to thrill,
When its last echo from the hill
Came like a mockery on that still
And corse-like multitude !

Even in that pause of blank surprise
While listening horror fixed all eyes,
That dreadful utterance said—

“Ye shrouded, from the grave arise—
Thou sea, give up thy dead !”

Then crash on hollow crash came near ;—
Sounds undefinable—
Yet known to superstition’s ear ;
And who such dull dread tones might hear,
Would understand them well !
Each awe-struck visage seemed to know
The shuddering clatter, long and low,
Increasing through the gloom,
Poured from ten thousand gates below
The cities of the tomb !

While glimmered up in fiend-like play
Ten myriad ground-stars of decay,
There came a strange yet fearful sight !
The concourse swelled—as gathering cloud—
Till mask and mime stood mixed with shroud,
In contrast grim and drear,
Then knew I well that phantom crowd—
The dead of time stood there !
They stood in their death-robcs—a fearful sight—
All wan in that wild and ghastly light !

One long, wild, wailing note of woe
Broke forth from all the realms below,
And a trumpet-accent cried, " 'Tis o'er !"
'Twas echoed far from sea and shore—
The starry concave wildly reeled,
And the planetary centre pealed,
Low, far down, rolls of hollow thunder
That seemed to rock the world asunder.

A burning twilight far away,
And fiery wreaths of blood-red day,
 Broke from the hollows near :
Its horrors half, no tongue can say—
 It was a dawn of fear !
Nor may I tell how that deadly light
Was swallowed in primeval night—
How surging blackness rose on high,
Too broad and deep for mortal eye,
 With shadowing sweep,
Unmeasured over earth and sky,
 From the dark waste infinity
 Of Ruin's deep !

A momentary stillness came,
A trance-like horror without name—

A rayless, soundless, formless pause
Of nature and of nature's laws.

And all was o'er!—But late was there
A splendid city, bright and fair;
One moment saw that concourse dread,
The living mingled with the dead:
Another—scarce another—lo!
The glittering and the ghastly show
Had vanished like the lightning's gleam,
Or changes of some frightful dream
That mocks the brain in fevered sleep—
And darkness brooded o'er the deep!

There was an end to time and place.
Alone I lay, self-poised in space,
A frameless thought.
'Twas strange—'midst changes wild and fast,
Fixed by one fear, the spirit sought
Through every change one yet more vast,
The most tremendous, and the last!

Nor vain that fear: through voids unknown,
A wide and waveless sea!

On—fleeting to the eternal throne,
 Across infinity,
By some dread instinct far and nigh,
—As leaves before chill autumn's sigh
 Collected roll—
The spirit world came sweeping by,
 Soul heaped on soul !
Legions, once proud, and brave, and fair,
 Alas ! no bravery was there !

Whither they went, I cannot say.
 From the pale train,
Once more to greet the blessed day
I started—glad to life's dull way
 To wake again.

THE
COCK-CROW HEARD AT MIDNIGHT.

BIRD, who thus breakest on the silence due
Of loneliest night with clamour, heard by few
Save the all-watchful Hours ; if, in their flight,
Thy ghostly trump, most vigilant Chanticleer,
They list, and with new fleetness through the night

Ply their untired career !

In this dread stillness ; the sepulchral hush
Of life, and all the host of living things ;
Thy lone, far-sounding iteration brings
An echo of the awful waves that rush
Among the sands of that perfidious shore,
We call the Present till our time is o'er :
For in the silent intermission shed
Between the hours unborn and newly dead,
Thou chauntest the past day's requiem, ere the next
Efface it from the busy brain of man ;

Who, by a thousand idle cares perplext,
To the brief limit of the vital span
Hastes, as the yester-hour which vainly flew,
To be forgotten too !

Lone voice of darkness ! Eastern legends say
That vigil note of thine is never still ;
Heard in the twilight of the matin grey,
Or when high noon glares on the sultry hill ;
When winking Hesper's eyelid in the west
Sheds slumber on each copse and dewy spray ;
When the late owlet's self is gone to rest,
And death-like stillness binds each mortal breast,
Thou still keepest watch, with thy perpetual lay
Counting the hours of ages—though the sound
On sleep's unconscious ear doth vainly fall,
Or in the din of high-orbed noon is drowned ;
Still ever in each listening interval
Upon the stillness comes thy constant call,
From undistinguishable distance bound,
Like a far-travelling voice of distant years,
That tells of other times to him the call that hears.

Swift at that wakeful call the free thought flies,
With wing unfettered, o'er the hoary deep

Of immemorial ages : as in sleep,
Worlds of the past appear, and shades arise
As at the call of some unearthly horn—
The conqueror, and the poet, and the sage,
Back to the fathers of the world's first age,
When that shrill call of thine first woke the morn.
—There was no solemn gloom, no sadness, then,

In that high lay !

To the fresh races of primeval men,
Strong in their secular prime, what was a day !
Their sun yet rose with unabated force,
Rejoicing as a giant on his course !
In unexhausted glory his fair wave
Shed the pure hues of Eden all around
The hills and valleys of the virgin ground,
A stranger to the plough—scarce conscious of a grave !

Yet they passed off, and left no trace behind,
Not even a tomb !—As vapour on the wind,
They were, and were not !—even their world went by.

Thy long lone cry

Went wildly o'er the waste and watery ball,
On which the deluge spread its dreary pall
O'er the wide grave of Adam's sons and daughters,
From the lone lifeboat on those shoreless waters.

But soon again old Time went forth to spin
His many-coloured web of fleeting life
With threads of light and darkness—love and strife—
Peopling the spacious realms of death and sin.
The mighty tide of days began again,

And patriarchal men
Held the great tenure of the world's estate
By title fast as pleader ever penned :

They yet had end—
Leaving brief record, and uncertain date !
And still more glorious times came on ;
Names of renown, whose tale hath long been told,
Great Nineveh and “ that great Babylon ;”
They scaled the heav'n in height ; then one by one
Went down the stream of ages, with their pride
Borne off, as bubbles of the mighty tide,
Or skyborne structures, melting as they go.
O, can it be, our Present glideth so !

Thro' the still twilight air
Does that far watch-cry bid the world prepare
To roll to charnel nothingness, and so,
Great London, like great Babel, to depart
And be a name—no more ? O Bird ! thy lay,
Thus, as of yore, breaking the silence grey,
Strikes as time's warning on the lonely heart,

And Fancy sees the stern old phantom stand,
Striding the mundane ball with scythe in hand,
To sweep all things of mortal birth away !

O Bird ! thy strain was in a different mood
Then in the dawn of one all-glorious day,
Tho' dark to mortal sense. That morn gleamed grey
On Pilate's hall—when the Redeemer stood
To satisfy the strictly righteous law
Unchangeable, which angels read with awe,
Far above earthly thought, of perfect good.
He stood alone—abandoned in that hour
By earth and heaven to the grave's dread power ;
But not by his all-righteous fortitude.
Hell triumphed—earth deserted—heaven forsook—
Creation stood appalled : 'twas then thy note
Found a perpetual record, as it smote
On Peter, like the accusing angel's cry !
And, not in anger, but in sorrow turned,
With mild sad sternness of much-wounded love,
The heavenly searching eye, touching above
All earthly fear ; and Peter's bosom burned
With sense of his unutterable wrong
To godlike goodness in its hour of sorrow.
O, could thy clarion shrill one moment borrow

The iteration of thy ghostly song,
In that sad hour of fear's extremity !
The faithful servant from his master dear,
For *one weak moment*, turned in human fear.
Alas ! how long, and by what sins are we
Kept loitering, in mere wantonness, aloof—
Oh ! for a heart of flesh to feel that sad reproof !

No trump that ever pealed on human ear
The loftiest note of victory's proud strain
On Waterloo or Cressy's glorious plain,
Was e'er so full of triumph or of fear—
No sound so big with portent shall be shed
On mortal ear again, on this low earth,
To speak the human empire's fall or birth,
Till the last trumpet shall awake the dead,
Bursting the sleep of ages—great and small—
The ransomed, but ungrateful sons of men,
To meet the eye that looked on Peter then,
At the third note of that accusing call ;
But, not as then, in love and mercy deep—
Oh ! for some call to rouse man from his fatal sleep !

SPRING.

FAIR Spring, if it be thou,
O'er yon misty mountain brow,
 In the porch of brightest dawn, dost appear,
With that scarf of every hue,
With that zone of pearly dew,
With thy freshness ever new,
 O come here !

From thy morning's eastern cave,
Thy gay bowers beyond the wave,
 Where Araby's blest sunbeam smiles ;
From the fragrant Indian steep,
Stretch thy light vans o'er the deep,
And drive those hours that weep
 O'er the isles.

Call each bright and gentle thing
That comes with thee, O Spring,
 To gladden every lawn and glade ;
The breeze and shower, the beam
That tinges cloud and stream,
Or plays where blue-bells gleam,
 In the shade.

By the fountain's fairy billow,
New silver the sad willow
 That droops its mournful braid o'er the pool ;
Scatter thyme and tufted reed
O'er the lilied lowland mead,
Where the sedgy streamlets speed,
 Clear and cool.

Bring each gem of heavenly hue,
Each child of sun and dew,
 Which moor, or mount, or meadow knows ;
All the wild flowers sweet that twine
In that sunny wreath of thine,
The cowslip, eglantine,
 And red rose.

Bring the painted wings that hover
On thy banks of honied clover,
 And the murmur of busy bees ;
And, as thy train advances,
The myriad maze that dances,
Where the arrowy swallow glances
 In the breeze.

Bid new life be of thy train,
And young bleatings fill the plain
 Till the shepherd's heart rejoice ;
Bid thy thrush call up the grove,
And thy cushat murmur love,
And thy lark in heaven above
 Find a voice.

But chief, O soul of flowers,
And heart-enlivening hours,
 The muse, and queen of love, wait for thee,
The nurse of hope thou art :
When thy sunbeams touch the heart,
Love and gladness they impart,
 And young glee.

Then hither—hither, Spring,
Wave thy fragrant sunny wing
 In the breezes of flowery May ;
Bring thy passion-haunted maze,
And thy choir of woodland lays,
For thee the world delays,
 Come away ! *

* *Dublin Penny Journal.*

THE PASSING BELL.

WITH its measured pause, and its long-drawn wail,
The minster bell swings on the gale,
And saddens the vale with its solemn toll—
That passeth away like a passing soul—
Pulse after pulse still diminishing on,
Till another rings forth for the dead and gone.

The minute-sound of that mourning bell
Is the lord's of the valley—the rich man's knell;
While it swells on his lawns and his woodlands bright,
He breathes not, hears not, nor sees the light;
On the couch of his ease he lies stiff and wan—
In the midst of his pomp he is dead and gone.
The pride hath passed from his haughty brow—
Where are his plans and his projects now?
Another lord in his state is crowned,
To level his castles with the ground!

Respect and terror pass reckless on—
His frowns and favours are dead and gone.

Had he wisdom, and wealth, and fame,
Mortal tongue shall forget his name :
Other hands shall disperse his store—
Earthly dream shall he dream no more :
His chair is vacant—his way lies on
To the formless cells of the dead and gone.

Passing bell, that does sadly fling
Thy wailing wave on the air of spring,
There is no voice in thy long wild moan,
To tell where the parted soul is flown,
To what far mansion it travels on,
While thou tollest thus for the dead and gone.

Yet, bell of death, on the living air
Thy notes come bound from the house of prayer—
They speak of the valley of shadow, trod
On a path once walked by the Son of God,
Whose word of promise inviteth on,
Through the gate unclosed for the dead and gone.*

* *Dublin Penny Journal.*

TO KATHARINE.

BELIEVE not I forget thee : not for one
Dark moment has my breast been so abandoned
By that fixed consciousness, that with its life
So long hath been as one. Away from thee,
My heart is self-divided, ever seeking
The loadstar of its plighted faith ; unchanged
By time or distance : and my steps forlorn,
Whether they move in sunshine or in gloom,
Are weary ever till they turn to thee.
Through every scene companion of my way,
In thee all cares find rest, all sorrows soothing—
For thee all joys are treasured up untasted,
As scattered sweets which the home-loving bee
Hoards for its mossy dwelling far away.

L I N E S

WRITTEN ON THE DEATH OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

ALL that of Scott may die, is dead :

The minstrel sleeps,

And yet upon his clay-cold bed

A nation weeps.

But long the fame he left shall fill

The world's broad eye—

A star for ever bright and still,

That cannot die !

For him no storied pile need give

Perennial fame :

Go—seek the stone that can outlive

The poet's name !

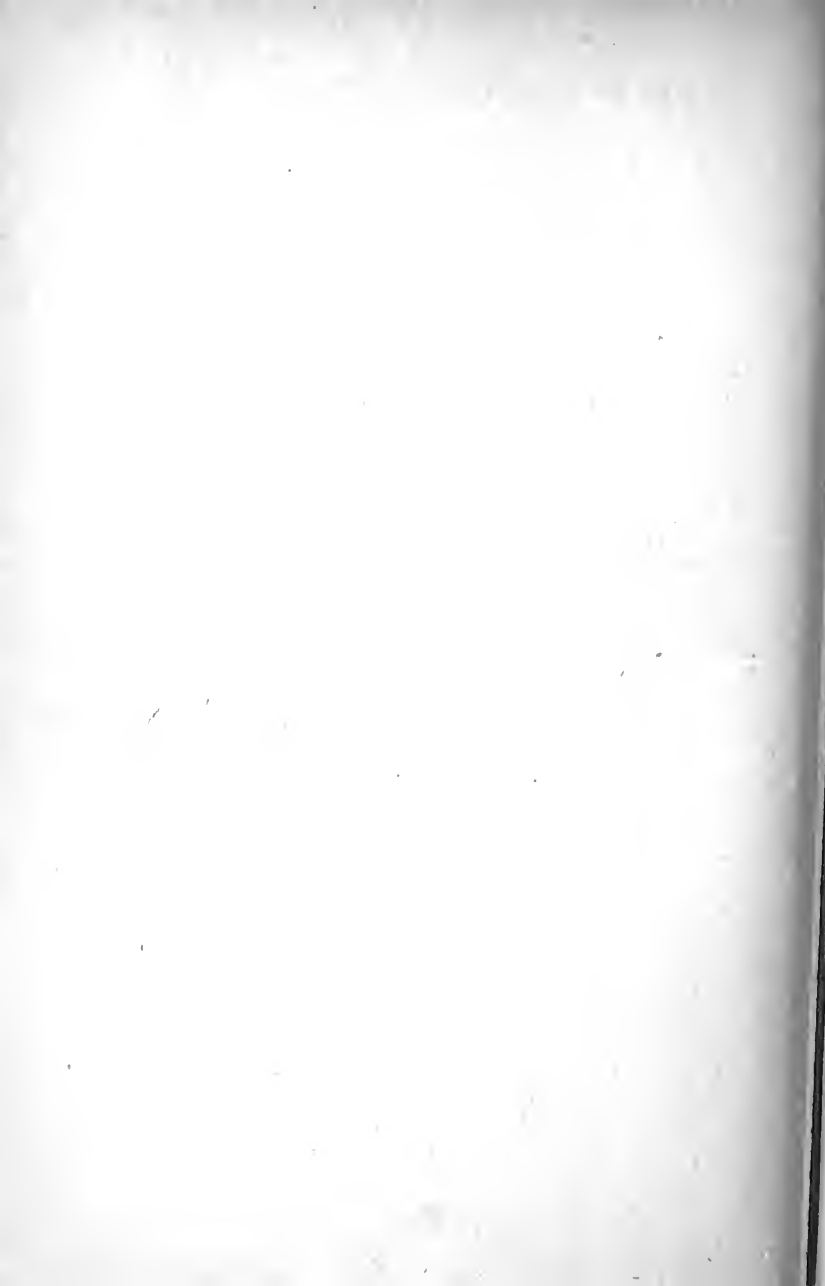
The tomb inscribed with conquests won—
 The pride of kings,
The proudest pile beneath the sun,
 Are passing things !

There needs no scroll, no cumbering stone
 With wasted art,
To say where Scott hath raised his throne—
 The human heart !
No blood-stained pillar dates his hour
 With trophied crime ;
But Nature's self attests his power
 To glad all time !

More true than the enchanted sphere,
 Agrippa's glass ;
He brought the past and distant near,
 Not so to pass ;
For, as the mightier master drew—
 Upon his sight
The world of ages rose, in true
 And living light !

O, in what dull oblivious age
 Shall man forget,
To glow and wonder o'er the page
 Our tears now wet?
When shall that grave be common clay?
 Or Ruin dare
At furthest time to cast his grey
 Oblivion there?

When feeling, fancy, wit shall sleep
 In mindless gloom,
Then dull forgetfulness may creep
 Around his tomb!
Then, may the pilgrim step forego
 That honoured shrine:
Then weeds on Dryburgh's tomb may grow,
 And, Avon, thine!



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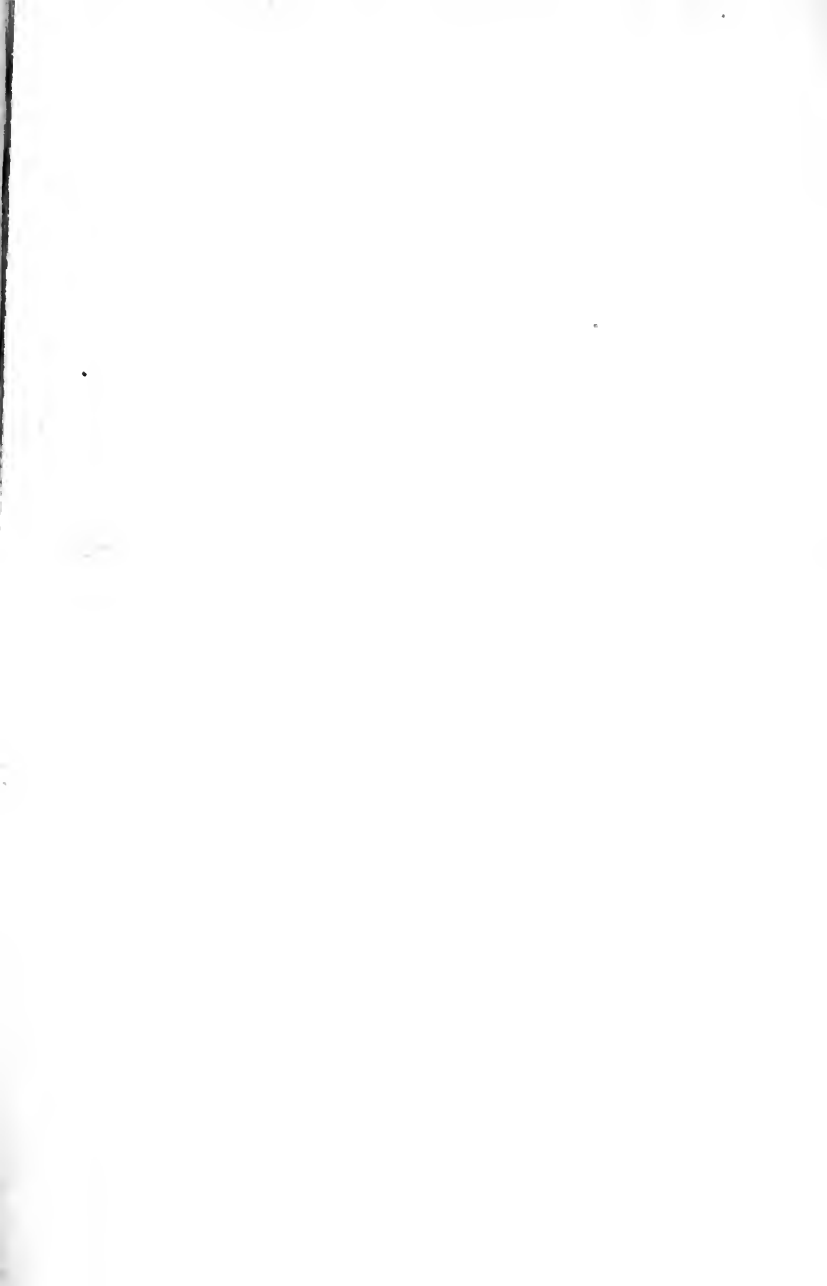
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